PHILIP JOWETT

CHINA'S WARS

ROUSING THE DRAGON 1894–1949

CHINA'S WARS

OSPREY
PUBLISHING

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THE SLEEPING DRAGON

In the 19th century, the Chinese Empire was in a terminal state of decay, under almost continual attack from both external and internal enemies. Over the several thousand years of its history, China had been ruled by a series of dynasties, many of which lasted for hundreds of years before they stagnated, and then were eventually replaced by a new, more vibrant imperial line. By 1850 the Qing dynasty had ruled China for almost 200 years, but had been in a steady decline since the late 18th century, when European visitors to China had been initially overawed by its grand palaces and even grander ceremonials, but had soon begun to see the many weaknesses of what was essentially a ramshackle empire.

Opposite page
This Japanese woodblock picture of 1895 shows a shell bursting in the middle of a unit of Chinese cavalry. Woodblocks usually showed the panicking, retreating and otherwise demoralized Chinese Imperial Army scattering before the valiant Japanese Imperial Army. They were unashamedly biased and colourful if not entirely accurate representations of the fighting in 1894–95.

The Qing dynasty had taken power in China by force in 1644. Its Manchu armies had invaded China from their Manchurian homeland and had installed their leader as the first Qing 'Pure' emperor. The 'alien' Manchurians had then taken another 15 years to defeat all of the pretenders to the throne from the previous Ming dynasty. China's population at this time was mainly Han, and they always saw the Qing dynasty as a foreign monarchy. The Qing maintained their separation from the rest of the population: Manchu and Han were kept apart and emperors only married brides with Manchurian lineage. Han men were made to wear their hair shaved at the front and worn in a long pigtail or queue at the back. This enabled the Manchus to identify their enemies in battle, but also provided a convenient way of holding a Chinese man during a beheading.

The Chinese population swelled enormously during the reign of the Qing, trebling from 100 million in 1650 to 300 million in 1800. It grew even faster over the next 50 years, to 450 million Chinese by 1850, and even the devastating crop failures and resulting famines common to China did not halt its rise.

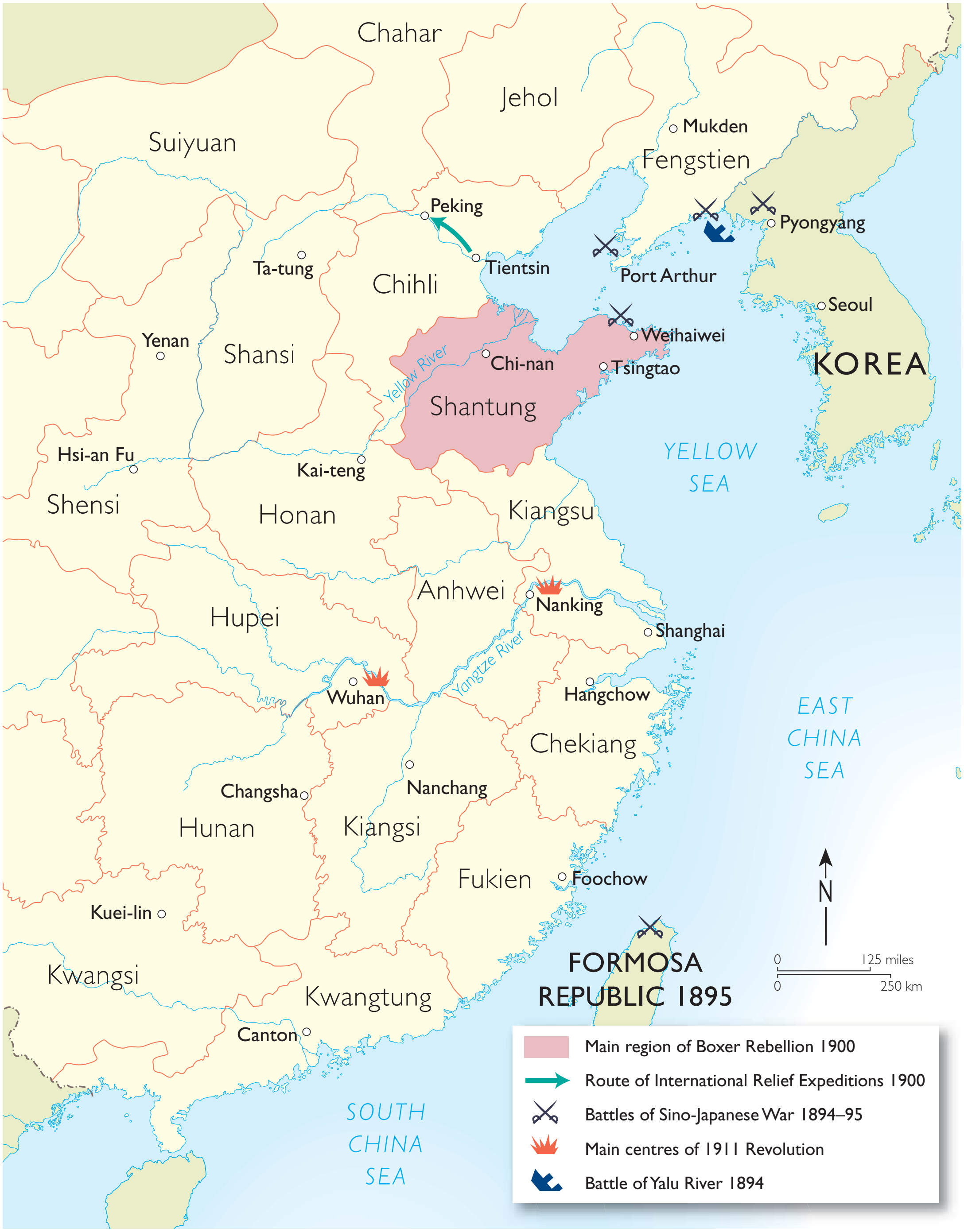
During the 18th century the Qing dynasty employed military force to try to expand the territories controlled by the empire. It launched a series of expeditions and invasions of neighbouring states, and expanded its lands in the west of the country, although three late-18th-century attacks against Burma, and the invasions of Nepal and Tonkin, were all abject failures. By the mid-19th century the empire extended over 3.7 million square miles, and its people comprised a fifth of the world's population.

To most outsiders China was an exotic place of mystery and intrigue but to European empire-builders and ambitious businessmen it was also a huge market to be exploited. Although China had established contact with its neighbours and with a few visiting traders in the 17th century, it was not until the mid-18th century that formal trading links were founded. The first British traders established a trading colony in Canton in 1757, but were forbidden to leave its confines. They, along with French and Portuguese traders, had to try and trade with a country who wanted to sell but not to buy. Chinese traders could come and sell their wares to the Europeans but the import of goods was largely forbidden. However, in the late 18th century, British traders from the East India Company were looking for a market for one of their main Indian crops: opium. The opium poppy was grown in huge quantities on the plains of north-east India and China soon became a lucrative market for the drug. Before long, as its addictive effects became apparent, the Qing dynasty became concerned about its widespread use. Its import was also having a negative effect on the Chinese economy with imports of the drug outstripping the country's exports of tea, silk and other goods.

To counteract this trade deficit, the Qing dynasty introduced laws in 1839 to ban the import of opium. To the British this was an infringement of their trading rights and they instigated a conflict with China in 1839 which appropriately became known as the 'Opium War'. Over the three years and five months of the Opium War, the British committed 19,000 troops. The poorly armed masses that made up the 200,000-strong Qing armies had no answer to the battle-hardened British Army, who defeated the Chinese in a series of battles. This first clash between a European power and imperial China ended with the capture of Shanghai. When the Qing forces were defeated many of their generals and their families committed suicide rather than face the shame. The Treaty of Nanking of 1842 concluded the Opium War with the Qing government reversing their decision over the import of the drug. The treaty also cost the Chinese treasury dearly with the Qing negotiators agreeing to pay the British 21 million US dollars over a three-year period. This payment included 12 million dollars in war reparations and three million in compensation for loss of trade to British businessmen. Furthermore, the Europeans – led by the British – now knew that the Qing dynasty could be coerced or bullied into agreeing to their demands for trading rights.

A number of further European attacks on the Qing dynasty and its territories ensued, with the Arrow War of 1856–58 reinforcing British rights over trade in China. This joint Anglo-French naval campaign led to the occupation of Canton in 1857 and the storming of the Taku Forts in 1858. The Allies refused to return the forts to the Chinese until they agreed to have foreign ambassadors at the Qing court. Fighting resumed again in 1860 when the British and French provoked the Chinese garrison in the Taku Forts to open fire on their ships. With this provoked action the war was back on and in August 1860 the Allies once again captured the fortifications. Having taken the forts a British and French expeditionary force marched 100 miles towards the capital at Peking. The Qing court fled and the Allied troops ransacked the Forbidden City before the Chinese finally agreed to their conditions. Virtually simultaneously the Russian Empire was taking advantage of Chinese weakness when their armies took over the vast Amur River region in 1858. Two years later, with no response from the embattled Qing court, the Russians annexed the maritime province, which became part of Siberia.

CHINA 1894–1911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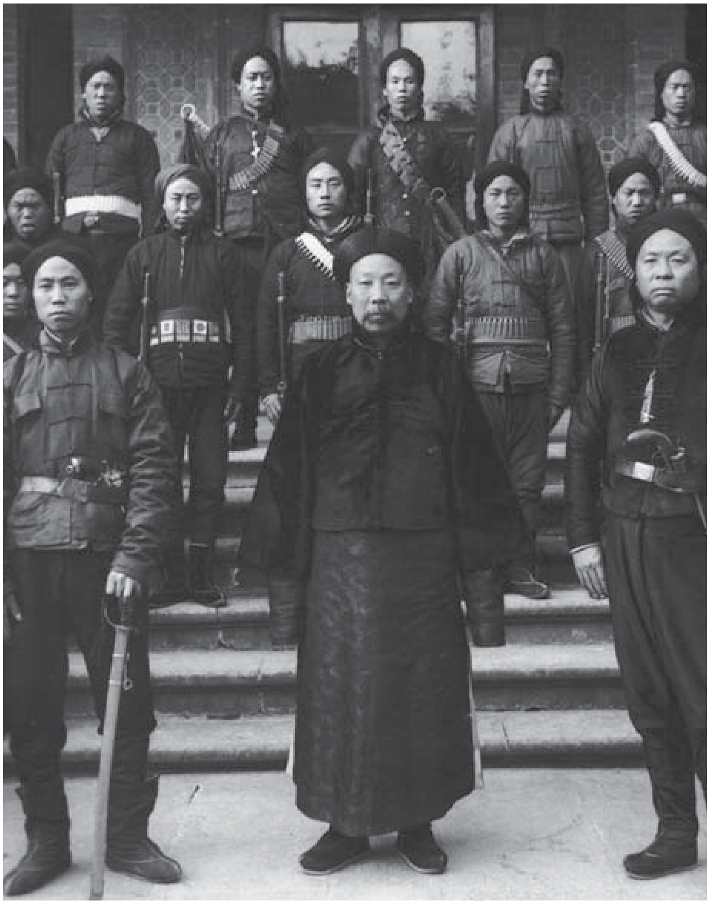
SOUTH CHINA SEA

▨	Main region of Boxer Rebellion 1900
→	Route of International Relief Expeditions 1900
⚔	Battles of Sino-Japanese War 1894–95
✹	Main centres of 1911 Revolution
⛴	Battle of Yalu River 1894

The Qing dynasty was also to be challenged during the 1850s and 1860s by a series of rebellions which almost destroyed it. The Taiping Rebellion, 1850–64, spread from Kwangsi province across most of south and central China. Its leader – who announced that he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ – commanded a fanatical army that grew to a total of 600,000 men. In defiance of the Qing restrictions on Han hairstyles the rebels grew their hair long, leading to the nickname 'long hairs'. With its capital at Nanking, the so-called 'Heavenly Kingdom' was finally defeated in 1864. It took a million-strong Qing army with European military advisors to finally defeat the Taiping Rebellion. The cost to the Chinese population was an estimated 20 million dead. These deaths were largely caused by famine and disease, the inevitable result of the devastation of large parts of the country, before the rebels were finally defeated.

At the same time, in northern and central China, the Qing were faced with another large rebellion, that of 200,000 Nien Rebels (1851–68). This rebellion was based on the poor Qing reaction to the famine in the region that had been caused by the repeated flooding of the Yellow River. The rebels already had a strength of 40,000 in the 1840s, and then used the people's anger at the lack of Qing government support to expand their army. Over the intervening 17 years of the rebellion, the Nien Rebels, with their fast-moving cavalry, repeatedly defeated Qing armies. Without any clear political objectives the rebellion was eventually worn down by the large number of Qing troops sent into their territory. Again the cost to the civilian population was heavy, with over 100,000 deaths in battle and from disease and starvation.

In 1861, in the midst of these upheavals, China saw the emergence of a woman who would come to dominate the Qing dynasty until her death in 1908, having a similar effect in China as Queen Victoria had in her 60 years as a pillar of the British establishment. Unfortunately the Dowager Empress Ts'u-hsi did not have the same positive influence as her British counterpart. She began her career as the favourite concubine of the Emperor Hsien-feng who ruled from 1850 until 1861. The emperor epitomized the isolationism of China in this period as he never met a single foreign dignitary in his 11-year reign. When he died, at the age of 30, he left only one son. The mother of this five-year-old boy had convinced the ailing emperor to agree to the child's accession to the throne on his deathbed. The mother then cleverly gathered around her a group of supporters, including the late emperor's widow, which allowed her to act as effective regent for her son and elevating her to the position



A government official stood outside his residence surrounded by a tough-looking bodyguard Braves in the early 1900s. The soldiers are armed with a mixture of weaponry including the two officers at the front who both have revolvers tucked into their belts. Their soldiers are well armed with modern-looking rifles and have plenty of ammunition in their bandoliers while a few also have fighting swords strapped to their backs.

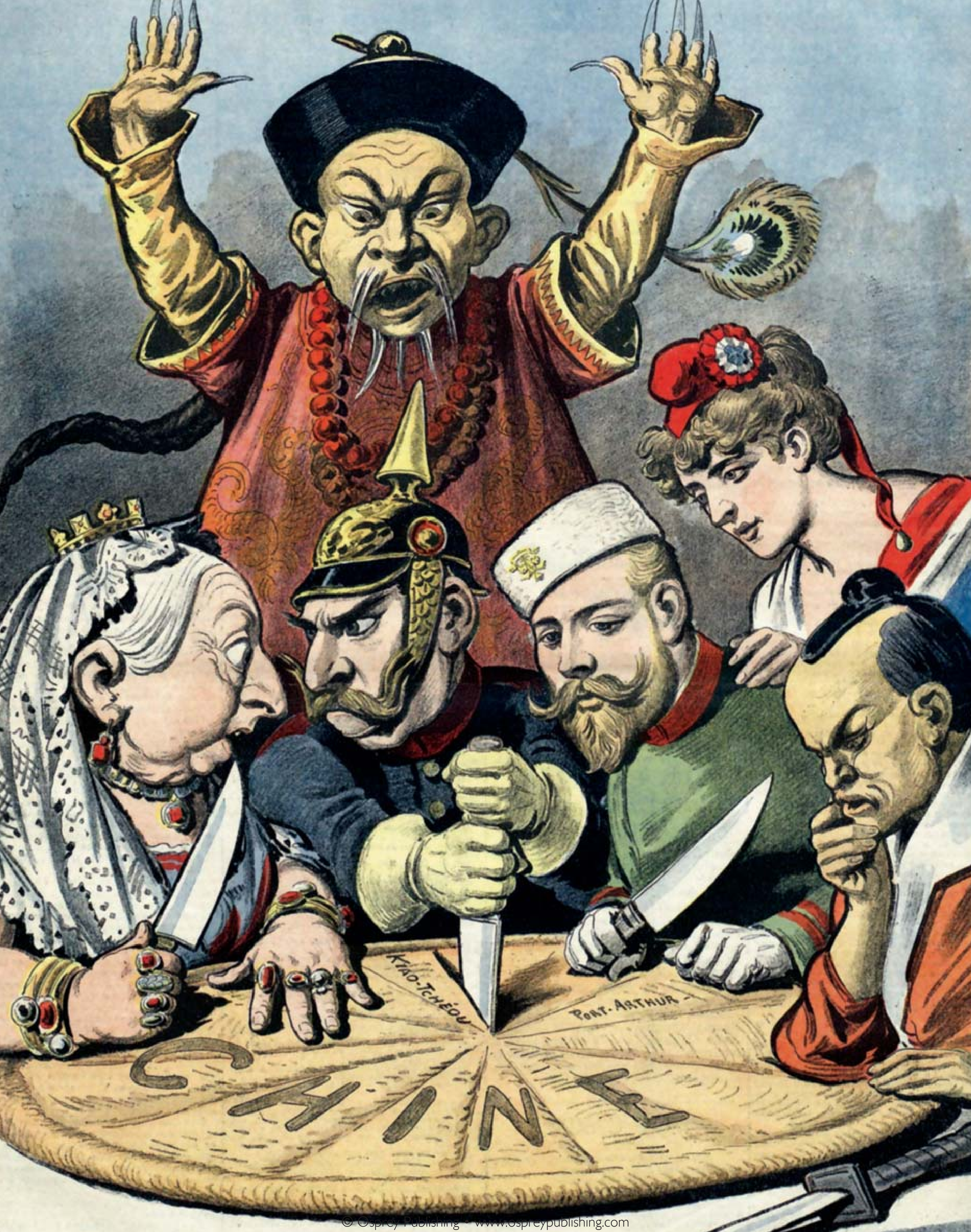
of dowager empress. Between 1862 and her death in 1908, the dowager empress was to become the de-facto ruler of China. She controlled China from 1862 until 1874 and after a year out of power re-established herself in 1875 for another 14 years. Even in official retirement she still held the reins of power and returned to direct rule in 1898 replacing the emperor – who was a little too reforming for her tastes. Despite her reputation for political astuteness, and her undoubted talents for survival and intrigue, she was not a good ruler. Her failure to reform and modernize China terminally weakened the empire. Her final years in power were in reality the death knell of the Qing dynasty, which only survived her by three short years.

The period from 1850 until the 1880s also saw a number of rebellions amongst the Muslim population of China. During the 1855–73 period there were major revolts in Sinkiang, Szechwan, Kansu and Chinghai provinces. As just one example, the North-Western Rising in Kansu lasted for ten years, from 1863 to 1873. In western Yunnan province in the early 1870s a local Muslim leader styled himself 'Sultan Suleiman' and ruled over what he called the 'Kingdom of the Pacified South'. In Sinkiang another rebel leader, Yakub Beg, ruled over his 'kingdom' from his capital at Kashgar. When he died in 1877 his family were made to suffer for his rebellion. Some were executed, while many of his sons and grandsons were dealt with in a more 'humane' way – castrated and then sent to work as eunuchs in the Imperial palaces of the Forbidden City in Peking.

Although all of these many revolts were eventually put down by the Imperial Army, they severely affected the government's ability to raise taxes. Not only had large swathes of China been devastated, rendering areas unable to pay taxes, but also the government knew it had to relax its taxation policy to avoid further rebellions. This meant that just when the Imperial treasury desperately needed more funds, the government didn't raise the land tax which it depended heavily on. Lack of taxes prevented investment in the military which, like the rest of Chinese society, stagnated throughout the late 19th century.

At the same time European military aggression continued to eat away at China's territory. Although the British were temporarily satisfied with their concessions, others wanted to take more from the Chinese. In 1884, France decided to annex parts of China's territories in Indo-China and took over the northern province of Tonkin. The resulting conflict was another one-sided war with the fighting at sea ending in disaster for the Qing Navy. The French fleet, with eight modern warships and two gunboats, engaged the Imperial southern fleet, which comprised 11 ships: wooden warships, junks and rowing boats armed with cannon. When the two fleets clashed in one of the main naval encounters, on 22 August, the Chinese flagship was sunk in one minute and within an hour all of their ships were on fire and 500 sailors were dead. Although the Qing armies, especially the Black Flag Army, fought well during the land campaign the result was still a Chinese defeat. The Peace of Tientsin gave Tonkin to France, and by 1887 they had also gained the other Indo-Chinese provinces of Annam and Cochin-China.

The many rebellions and wars faced by the Qing dynasty in the 19th century had further weakened an empire already in a state of collapse. Despite thousands of years of Imperial rule, the isolationalist Qing government could no longer ignore the realities of the modern world. Internal revolt and wars with modernized European armies ensured that the Qing dynasty teetered from one disaster to the next as the Imperial hold began to slacken. In many ways the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, and the subsequent Qing dynasty's humiliation at the hands of the European powers in 1900, were the final straws, although it would take another 11 years for the revolutionary pressure ignited by these humiliations to finally topple Imperial rule.


KIAO-TCHEOU
PORT-ARTHUR
CHINE

CHAPTER 1

BRUTAL AWAKENING

1894–1911

The Qing dynasty had suffered several military defeats at the hands of the British and the French between 1840 and 1884, which had left the Chinese in a weak position to respond to aggression from any enemy closer to home. Despite this, as the 19th century drew to a close Imperial China's antiquated army and navy would soon have to prepare for conflict with her imperial neighbour.

Ever since Japan had emerged from self-imposed isolation in the 1860s it had been trying to catch up with the European powers, modernizing as fast as possible despite her limited resources. In just a few decades Japan had taken great strides including, importantly, the

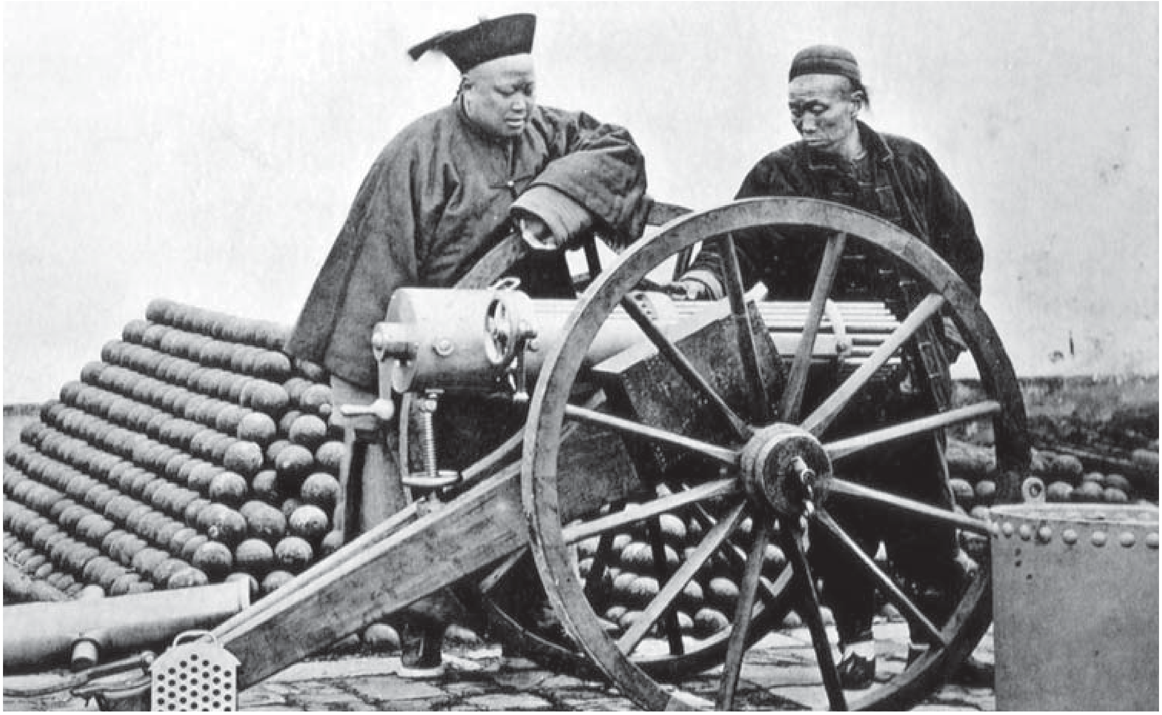
Opposite page
This French cartoon from 1898 shows an exasperated China watching the leaders of the British Empire, Germany, Russia, France and Japan dividing up the symbolic Chinese pie. China could do little against the combined might of the European powers who between them were determined to extract as much as they could out of the weak and corrupt nation.

modernization of its army and navy. The many schemers behind the Japanese Imperial throne were determined that a new empire should be built on the Asian mainland. Any expansion into Asia would inevitably be at the expense of the only other imperial power – China – which either ruled directly or otherwise influenced the majority of East Asia. Throughout the 19th century the imperial government in Peking had controlled not just China itself but had also been involved in other regions, including Mongolia, Tibet and some provinces of Indo-China over which it had suzerainty. Korea was also part of China's sphere of influence, and it was in this isolated 'Hermit Kingdom' that the first clashes China and Japan were to take place.

MODERNIZING THE CHINESE ARMY 1860–95

After 1860, the Qing court finally began to realize that China could benefit from Western ideas and innovations. Chinese officials understood that in order to resist increasing pressure from the European powers they would have to learn from the foreigners. The intention of the Chinese imperial government however was to 'cherry pick' elements from Western society without introducing any negative influences. Industry and technology in general would have to be imported from the West so that in future China could fight the European powers on as equal a footing as possible. This was of course particularly relevant when it came to military developments and innovations.

Between 1861 and 1894, the imperial government introduced its so-called 'Self-Strengthening Movement', which was intended to modernize most aspects of Chinese industry and commerce. These modernizing policies included plans to revolutionize the Chinese war industry and build government arsenals and shipbuilding yards to equip the Imperial Army and Navy. Various arsenals were built and European machinery and experts were brought in to show the Chinese how to produce armaments and build ships. Unfortunately, although vast amounts of money were lavished on the project, the Chinese-manufactured ships and rifles simply did not match the quality of the imported models. In addition, it was far more expensive to manufacture armaments in China than it was to simply import them. For instance, when the Kiangnan Arsenal opened it was supposed to produce Remington-type breech-loading rifles for the Imperial Army. However over a two-year period, 1871–73, only 4,200 were



An Imperial Army officer inspects one of the US-made Gatling guns imported into China in the late 19th century. Weaponry like this was not bought in sufficient quantities to transform the Chinese Imperial Army into a modern military force. Conflict between the traditionalists and the modernizers in the Chinese military was to leave the Imperial Army unprepared for war with Japan in 1894.

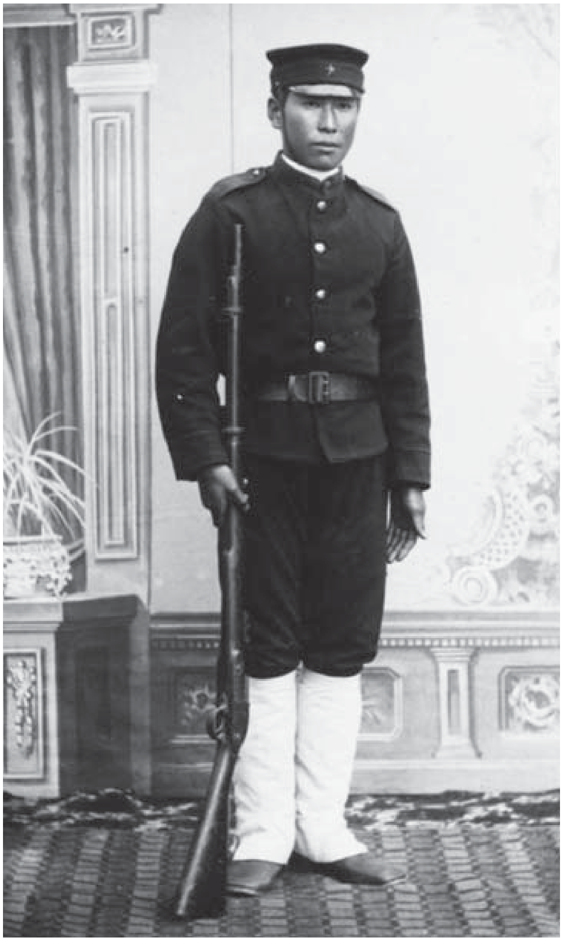
manufactured. These proved to be far more expensive than the original Remington imports from the USA.

The training and organization of the Imperial Army were also issues for the Chinese, and at least some lessons had been learnt from the Taiping and Nein rebellions in the 1850s and 1860s. It was the government's near-defeat at the hands of the Taiping Rebellion that made it clear to many Imperial officials that China had to modernize its army. The army finally defeated the Taiping Rebellion in 1864, with the help of a number of European military advisors. Foreign advisors like the British Charles George 'China' Gordon and the American Frederick T. Ward had a positive impact. They proved that if Chinese troops were given modern training and modern armaments, they could fight in a modern way. More foreign advisors began to arrive after 1865 and they began to train selected Chinese units with recruits taken from the Green Standard Army. These modernized units were known as 'Lien Chun' or 'New Formations' and although their training and weaponry were not to European standards, they were an improvement on that of the older units. Modernized units were organized into battalions which were 500 strong for infantry and 250 strong for cavalry. Battalions were then organized into loosely established brigades.

The Huai Army

While there were some older Imperial Army officers who always resisted reform, preferring that their men still be armed with spears, bow and arrows, it would be wrong to assume that all Chinese military officers in the 19th century were happy with the status quo. Humiliating defeats in the various wars against European armies had made a number of more enlightened Imperial Army officers look to the West for improvements to their forces. The Huai Army, for instance, was a modernized militia army which had been raised in the 1860s to fight the Taiping Rebellion. It was first organized by General Li Hung-chang in 1861 and had a strength of 25,000 men including a number of former Taiping rebels. After three months of training, this partly modernized force successfully took part in the decisive battle for Shanghai in 1861. The command structure in the Huai Army was different to that of the more traditional armies. In the traditional Imperial Army unit, officers were constantly rotated, which prevented them developing any relationship with their soldiers and building up an esprit-de-corps. In contrast, Huai Army officers remained with their units and this new system also meant that officers could now have an influence on who was allowed to join their unit, rather than just taking charge of a poorly recruited rabble. Most Huai units were armed with modern weapons, and unit commanders insisted on having some input into which rifles were purchased. Some Huai officers were even sent to Germany to study European drill, although some of what they were taught did not really apply to Chinese troops.

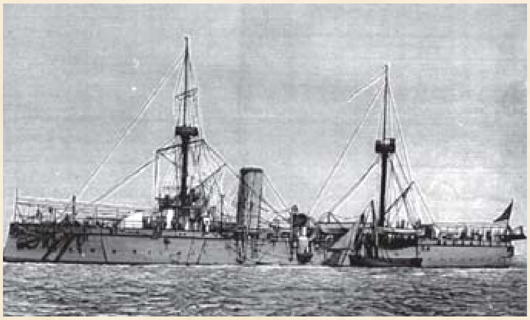
Although Li had led the way in making general improvements, one of his commanders, General Chou Sheng-ch'uan, wanted to go further. Chou was the most forward-looking officer in the Imperial Army in the 1860s, and he was fascinated by all the new military technologies being introduced into European armies. He had studied military medicine and was even critical of European advisors like Charles Gordon who chose to ignore its uses. The problem was that most Europeans



This Japanese Imperial Army infantryman is wearing the typical dark-blue winter uniform of the 1894 to 1905 period. His peaked cap and jacket are faced in the red of the infantry branch and he wears white cloth gaiters over his boots. Although his cap may date this photograph from the early 1900s, his imported Enfield 'Geberu' rifle belongs to the pre-1880 Imperial Army.

The Beiyang Fleet

The control of the seas around China and Japan was always going to be vital to the outcome of any conflict between the two Asiatic powers. China was confident in its navy, which had been built up a great expense since the 1860s. Although China officially had four fleets in 1894, the largest, best-equipped and dominant fleet was the Beiyang or 'Northern Seas Fleet'. This fleet had been lavished with most of the available funds for the navy thanks to the patronage of one of the most powerful men in China, Li Hung-chang. He was a major supporter of the 'Self-Strengthening Movement', and was determined to produce a strong modern navy for China. At the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, the Beiyang Fleet was the largest in the Far East, and the eighth largest in the world. At the time it was rivalled by the second biggest fleet, the Nanyang or 'Southern Seas Fleet'. The Nanyang Fleet was fatally weakened, however, when Li, using his influence, insisted on transferring some of its most modern gunboats to the Beiyang Fleet. In exchange Li sent the Nanyang Fleet an equal number of obsolete gunboats from his own fleet! The two other Chinese fleets – the Fukien and the Kwangtung – were much smaller and were usually restricted to a few gunboats each. When the Sino-Japanese War began the Beiyang Fleet had a strength of two battleships built in Germany, eight armoured cruisers, six steel-protected British-built gunboats anda number of torpedo boats.



The Chinese protected cruiser *Chih-Yuen* was one of the most modern warships in the Beiyang Fleet in 1894. All the crew of the ship went down with the vessel when it was sunk by the Japanese at the battle of the Yalu River.

serving in the Imperial Army in the 1860s saw the Chinese soldier as expendable and easily replaced. Chou wanted to create a well-trained and valued force which invested in its men. He also studied other military technologies and, among other innovations, tried to introduce the use of military telegraphs. To encourage his troops to improve their marksmanship he also brought in a system of rewards and punishments: badges and money for good marksmanship and punishments for lack of effort in training. By 1871 the Huai Army – which numbered nearly 45,000 troops – was considered the best army in China. It was to fight with some success against the French in 1884–85 and during the subsequent 1894–95 war with Japan. Despite its successes, the general morale and performance of the Huai Army declined over the years. Good officers like Chou increasingly found that their reforms were being diluted by their fellow officers' stubborn traditionalism. Although by the 1880s the Huai Army was still well regarded, its standards were only slightly superior to most other Chinese armies. It was not that the other armies had risen to its level but that the Huai had sunk to the level of the other armies. Its officers had aged with the army and many were now stuck in their ways and were unwilling to teach the younger, inexperienced officers who were taking their places. Although the Huai Army was to have an active role in China's defence for another ten years or so, it would be succeeded by other more modern armies.

Although some formations within the Imperial Army, like the Huai, were improving in the late 19th century, the vast majority of its formations were still out of date. In 1884 a French military observer, Baron G. de Contenson, wrote a study of the Chinese Imperial Army. He was not at all complimentary about the army and noted that although the force looked formidable on paper it was, 'A rude medieval militia, called out now and then for a holiday parade'. His comments on the Green Standard troops concluded that: 'Wretchedly paid, these soldiers have nearly all of them callings besides the military one, and they are careful to wear their uniforms as seldom as possible. Sometimes they act as policemen and they are the only postmen in the Empire.'[1]

THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR

Ever since the Empire of Japan had come out of its self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world in the 1860s it had begun to make noises about its position in East Asia. Within a decade it had already begun flexing its muscles over its ambitions to expand its territories in Asia. Any Japanese expansion in Asia was certain to impact on the Chinese Empire and so would certainly pit the imperial powers against each other militarily.

As part of their expansion plans for East Asia, the Japanese had established a presence in the Empire of Korea. These plans included establishing trade links between Japan and the so-called 'Hermit Kingdom' in the 1880s. Japan's encroachment on what was the Chinese regarded as their sphere of influence was an unwelcome development for the Qing dynasty. Although Korea was officially independent, it was under the nominal suzerainty of the Chinese Empire. China further alarmed when Japanese military advisors arrived in Korea to help train its poorly organized troops. The Chinese, under Yuan Shi-kai, had been training the Koreans since the early 1880s and also had six battalions of troops stationed in the country. The brinkmanship between the Chinese and the

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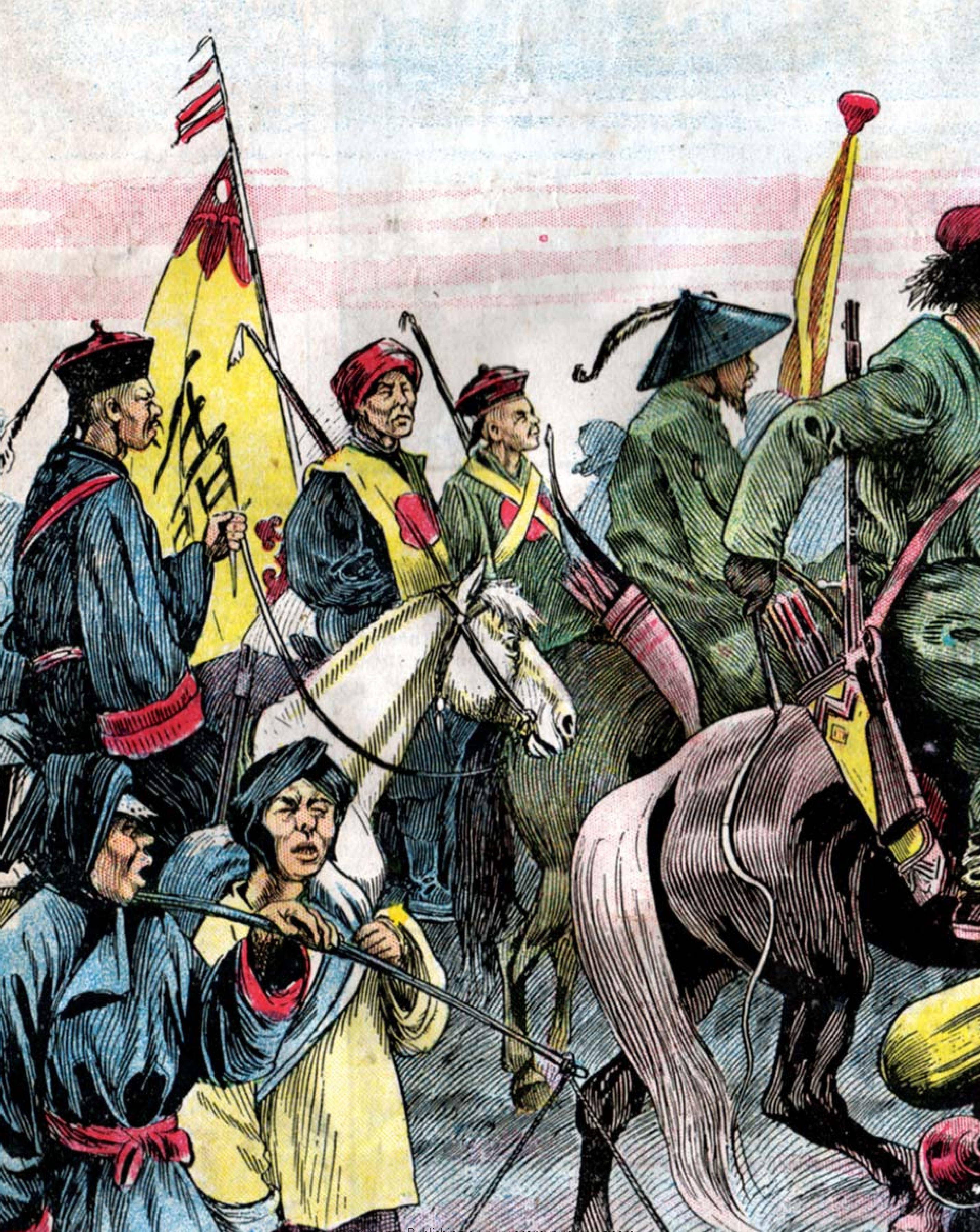
[1] Baron G. de Contenson, *Chine et Extrême Orient* (1884).

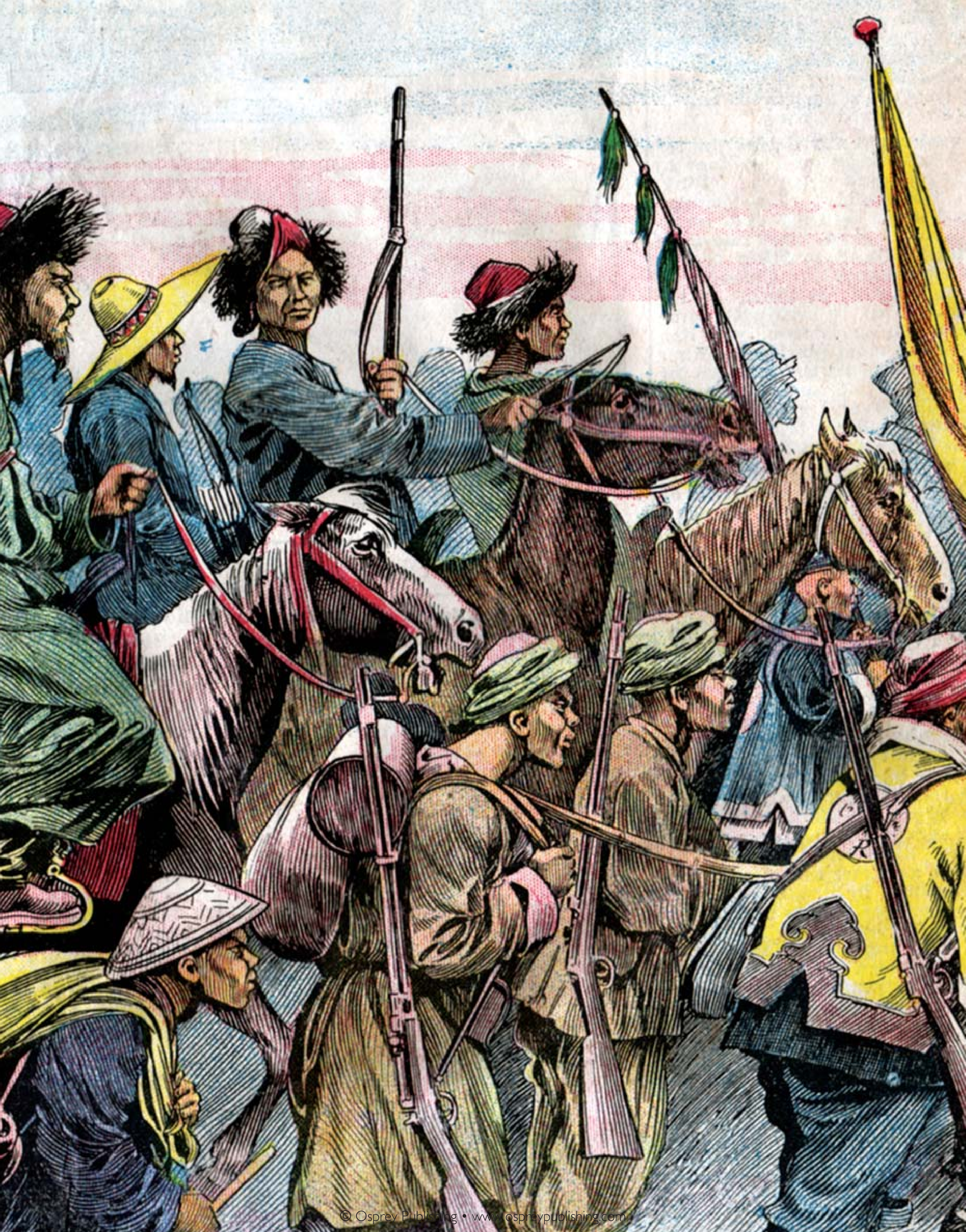
Japanese in Korea continued and the balance of power altered when China reduced its troop levels there in 1884, when it was fighting the French for control of North Vietnam, another Chinese protectorate. China withdrew three of the six battalions in Korea, in order to send them to fight the French in Tonkin. Japanese troops used the Chinese government's distraction to try to launch a take-over of Korea. With the reduction of Chinese troops in Seoul, the Korean capital, the Japanese could launch a *coup d'état* against the Korean government. Yuan Shi-kai responded to this coup by immediately leading some of his Korean trainees in a counter-coup which quickly restored the government. Despite expectations, these undeclared clashes between the Chinese and Japanese did not develop into an all-out war. As neither side was yet ready to escalate the hostilities, they came to a temporary compromise. In April 1885 the Tientsin Convention was signed between China and Japan, requiring the withdrawal of both nations' troops from Korea. Earlier in the year the Japanese had sent a force of 1,500 men to Seoul, on the pretext of protecting their citizens during riots against their presence. The convention required that in future both countries had to inform the other if they intended to send troops into Korea for any reason.

This agreement held more or less for ten years, until the launch of a peasant revolt against the Korean Min government and the country's unpopular empress in March 1894. The Korean people were tired of their government being treated as a 'puppet' by both the Japanese or Chinese and demanded the nationals of both countries be thrown out Korea. Initial attempts by the Korean Army to quell the uprising failed and a 2,500-strong Chinese Expeditionary Force was sent to assist. In Japanese eyes this contravened the Tientsin Convention, and they duly sent 8,000 of their own troops through the Korean port of Chemulpo to Seoul. Even though the Koreans themselves had managed to crush the rebellion in the meantime, neither a Chinese nor a Japanese troop withdrawal seemed likely. Japan made threats against any further Chinese reinforcements arriving in Korea and when it was discovered that 1,200 were already on their way by sea, war was inevitable.

The Chinese Army in the Sino-Japanese War

At the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, the Chinese Imperial Army was made up of three main components with the so-called Eight Banners forming the elite. The Eight 'Banners' or armies were segregated along ethnic lines into Manchu, Mongol, Moslem and Han Chinese





Previous page
Chinese irregular cavalry and infantry from the north-western provinces move towards the front during the 1894–95 war. These picturesque horsemen were one of the more effective contingents of the Imperial Army and were armed with rifles and bow and arrows. The rag-tag look of Imperial Chinese troops was soon to be reflected in their performance in battle against the Japanese.

units. Bannermen who made up the Eight Banners got higher pay than the rest of the army while the Manchu soldiers amongst them received further privileges. In total there were 250,000 men in the Eight Banners. Over 60 per cent of these troops were kept in garrisons in the Peking Metropolitan area, with the remaining 40 per cent serving as garrison troops in the major cities of China.

The Green Standard Army was a 600,000-strong gendarmarie force recruited from the Han who constituted the majority of the Chinese population. Its soldiers were not given any military training as such in time of peace, but were expected to fight in any conflicts.

The third component was an irregular force called the Braves. The Braves, which were used as a sort of reserve force for the regular army, were usually recruited from the more far-flung provinces of China, and were formed into very loosely organized units from the same province. Sometimes described as mercenaries, its volunteers received as much military training as their commander saw fit to give. With no fixed unit organization it is impossible to say how many battle-ready Braves there actually were in 1894.

There were also the smaller number of units, mainly in the Huai Army, which had received limited training by Western military advisors. Although the Huai troops were a small minority of the overall Imperial Army, they were to do the majority of the fighting in 1894–95. In reality, although these Huai troops who fought in the 1894–95 war were not able to defeat the more westernized Japanese Imperial Army, they were the best that China had. Other troops who fought in the war came from the North-Eastern and Manchurian armies, but these were not up to the standard of the Huai soldiers. The armies involved in the war could have been reinforced but if the better-trained Huai troops could not defeat the Japanese then bringing in larger numbers of poorer troops would not have affected the result. In terms of sheer numbers, the armies of the south may have looked impressive, but they were simply not up to the standard of their northern comrades.

One major weakness of the Imperial Army was that its older officers were often totally resistant to reform. Many looked back on their service in the Taiping Rebellion with nostalgia, and thought that if they fought the same way as they had 30 years before they could repeat their victory. Most officers were not capable of commanding the army in the kind of war that it was about to embark on. The Chinese Imperial Army in 1894 was such a mixture of modernized, partly modernized and 'medieval' un-modernized units that no commander could have led them successfully. The soldiers were also drawn from many diverse provinces that had no affinity with each other. As one commentator stated, 'There are Chinese troops: there is no Chinese Army, or rather there are as many armies as there are regions'.

Some units were armed with a wide variety of modern rifles that had been imported in the years before the Sino-Japanese War. Other units were armed with rifles and muskets dating back to the middle of the century. Attempts to fully equip the Imperial Army with modern rifles had been made as far back as the 1860s. The first foreign rifles had arrived in large numbers during the Taiping Rebellion and the foreign military advisors who came to train the Imperial Army against the Taiping rebels were the first modernizing influences on the archaic Chinese military system. Some, like the American Frederick Ward, began to import rifles themselves into China and sell them to the Imperial government. These first modern rifles were used mainly to equip the 'elite' units which were under foreign command during the Taiping Rebellion. The Chinese had cultivated a long history of producing their own weaponry and did not wish to rely on foreign imports. In 1864 Imperial General Tso T'sung-t'ang established a modern arsenal in Fukien province at Foochow. The following year another General, T'sing Kuo-feng established his own arsenal in Shanghai and both produced rifled muskets and bayonets. These new arsenals were not able to supply the increasing demands from the Imperial Army and in the 1870s the Chinese began to import larger quantities of modern rifles. Two of the most popular rifles were the German Mauser M1871 and the French Gras which were both bought in rifle and carbine form. During the 1884 war with France the Imperial Army imported a large shipment of arms which included 4,000 Remington Model 1879s. By 1894, due to a disjointed import policy, the Imperial Army was armed with a real mixture of old and new muskets and rifles. These included old Austrian muskets dating back to the 1850s, British Martini-Henrys and Enfields. The Mauser M1871 had retained its popularity with the Imperial Army and Chinese arsenals had produced an improved version of it. This new improved Mauser was tested against the Imperial Japanese Army's standard rifle in 1894, the Murata, with which it compared favourably. Unfortunately only the better Chinese units were equipped with the Mauser in 1894 and these were put into service alongside older weapons as the Chinese military did not usually phase out older models when new weapons became available. New rifles were usually issued to soldiers who passed their older types on to new recruits or swapped them for a small payment. This of course led to the problem of many types of rifle in service in one unit, with all the attendant supply problems. The chaotic supply system in general in 1894–95 meant that many of the soldiers were supplied with ammunition which did not fit their weapons.

In addition to conventional rifles, the Chinese used a number of wall guns or 'jingals'. Jingals were based on a standard model of rifle or musket, which was then re-engineered to a larger calibre, up to 0.75 inches. There were several types of jingal in service with the Chinese in 1894, the most common being an enlarged copy of the Remington-Lee – the original rifle was 0.45 calibre while the jingal version, which was produced at Tientsin Arsenal in the 1880s, was 0.60. Two-man jingals were also made and these were usually permanently mounted on the walls of a fortress. As one observer noted, it was a criminal waste of modern military facilities to have government arsenals producing jingals instead of modern rifles. Individual Imperial commanders were also often responsible for supplying their own men with rifles from funds allocated by the Qing government. General Li Hung-chang, commander of the Huai Army, whose troops were routinely described as 'some of the best armed in the army' equipped his Tientsin Regiment with Remington rifles from US factories at New Haven, Connecticut. Other Imperial officers were not so enlightened, with one reportedly suggesting in 1894 that his men should throw away their new rifles and fight with their muskets and jingals.

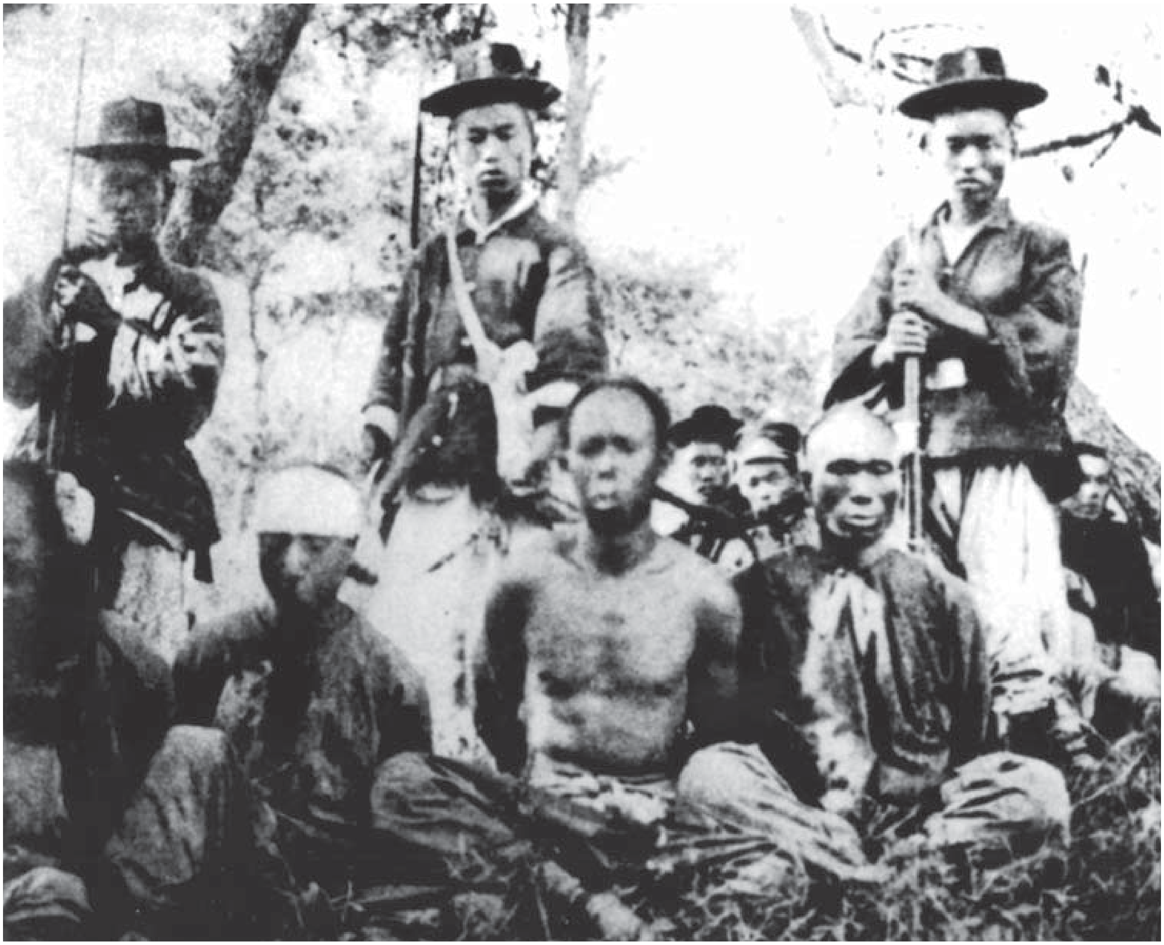
During the 1894–95 war the Chinese also had a number of rotary machine guns in service with the first type being the 56mm Maxim-Nordenfeldt Maxim Model 1889. China had bought a reported 151 of this gun via a firm in Hong Kong between 1892 and the outbreak of the war. They also had a unknown number of 60mm Gatling rotary machine guns which were purchased in the latter part of the 1870s and into the 1880s. Some Gatlings were also reportedly produced at the Nanking Arsenal during the early 1890s. Some of the obsolete Gatlings were still in first-line service with the Imperial Army at the time of the 1911 Revolution. The Imperial Army had imported a number of German-made Krupp field guns and mountain guns in the 1880s and early 1890s. As with the modern firearms, these were put into service alongside earlier 'medieval' field pieces.

An eyewitness report from 1895 shows how little respect the average Chinese soldier had for any modern weaponry he was issued with. The witness noted that the Imperial troops – 5,000 troops from Hupei province – were armed mainly with a mix of Mausers from the 1870s, and a few Austrian Mannilicher rifles which were carried alongside old flintlock muskets and jingals. He reported that their artillery was made up of primitive wrought-iron cannons with a bore of 2.5 inches, which did not appear to have any carriage and with the only kit being a large wooden rammer. Strewn around their camp he noticed were several 'beautiful little Krupp field pieces and Hotchkiss revolving cannon' which were all 'dismantled and littered around in the mud'. Regarding the officers and soldiers themselves, his observations were that the officers were 'civil' and the other ranks 'well behaved', but their camp was dirty.

Despite all the modern arms imported into China in the 19th century, 40 per cent of Imperial soldiers were not issued with rifles or even muskets. They were armed, as they had been for centuries, with a variety of swords, spears, pikes, halberds and bows and arrows. Against the well-trained, well-armed and disciplined Imperial Japanese troops, they would have little chance.

The Japanese Imperial Army and Navy in the Sino-Japanese War

The Japanese Imperial Army which fought in the 1894–95 conflict had undergone a period of rapid modernization since the mid-1800s. In 1871, a new European-style uniform had been introduced which was then updated on a regular basis. This was a visual indicator that the Japanese were mirroring the changes in contemporary European armies, in contrast to the Chinese who retained their old medieval-style uniforms. By 1884 the modernized Japanese Imperial Army had grown to 60,000 men in six infantry divisions as well as an Imperial Guard Division. At the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese Imperial Army had a strength of 120,000 men in two armies and five divisions. The 1st Army which fought during the Sino-Japanese War was made up of the 3rd and 5th divisions while the 2nd Army had the 1st, 2nd and 6th divisions. The 4th Division and the Imperial Guards Division were kept in reserve. After the battle of Pyongyang the Japanese re-organized their forces in Korea with the 1st Army Corps consisting of the 5th and 3rd divisions. The 3rd Division was divided into the 5th and 6th brigades and the 5th into the 9th and 10th brigades. During the war the Japanese also employed a large number of Korean auxiliaries to augment their regular troops. Although the Japanese



This rare poor-quality image from the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 shows Chinese prisoners of war being guarded by Korean auxiliary troops under the command of the Japanese. These Korean troops with their distinctive headgear appear to be armed with muskets dating back to the mid-19th century.

Army was relatively well armed it was still in the process of equipping its troops with the most modern weapons. Only two divisions had the new Murata M1889 magazine rifle which was brand new and had not been tested in the field when war broke out. The rest of the army had the recently produced, but now obsolete, M1880 version of the Murata.

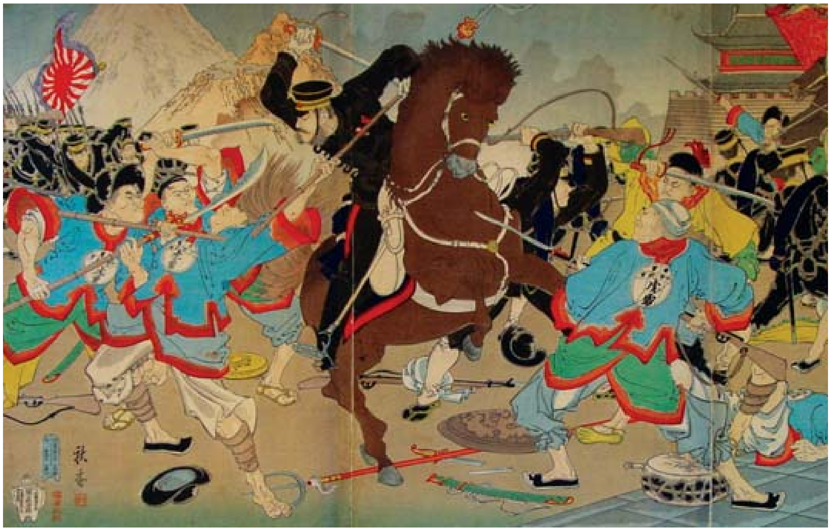
Another problem for the Japanese Army was a shortage of field guns at the start of the war. The field guns they did have were well-served by well-trained crews, and the artillery – like the engineers and other technical branches – was highly competent. The Imperial Japanese Navy in 1894 was small by European standards but was equipped with modern warships. It had 12 modern cruisers at the start of the war, one frigate, two coastal defence ships and 22 torpedo boats. Although Japan's economy would not stretch to large battleships, it had developed tactics which used the speed and heavy armament of its cruisers to compensate for this. Certainly against the Chinese Imperial fleets of 1894 the Japanese Navy and its English-trained officers and crews were confident of victory.

The war breaks out

Before war had been officially declared by Imperial China and Japan, the first shots of the war were fired on both land and sea as the two empires jostled for supremacy in East Asia. A flotilla of three Japanese cruisers – the *Yoshino*, *Akitsushima* and *Naniwa* – had been sent to cruise along the Korean coastline in July. Their mission was to intercept any Chinese warships or other vessels which could be deemed to be on military work. They soon encountered the Chinese cruiser *Tsiyuen* and the gunboat *Kwangyi* on the morning of 25 July. The two Chinese ships had left their port to meet another gunboat, the *Tsaokiang*, which was escorting the *Kowshing*, a transport ship carrying 1,100 reinforcements to Korea. Both sides appear to have been spoiling for a fight and quickly moved to battle stations. According to Japanese sources, when the Chinese ships opened fire on the three cruisers, a short one-sided battle ensued following which the *Tsiyuen* escaped and the *Kwangyi* was grounded. The powder magazine of the gunboat exploded shortly afterwards and most of its crew were killed. In the meantime the *Tsaokiang* and the *Kowshing* sailed into the range of the Japanese ships. The Chinese gunboat was captured and the transport was told to follow the Japanese ships into port. Arguments broke out aboard the *Kowshing* with the soldiers on board telling the English captain and his officers to ignore the Japanese orders and sail back to Taku. The captain and his English crewmates, realizing what the Japanese intended to do next, jumped overboard. As expected the Japanese opened fire on the transport. The *Kowshing* sank, and most of the troops drowned. The loss of the urgently required troops was a severe blow to the Chinese and they could no longer rely on reinforcements by sea to their forces in Korea.

Although fighting was to continue for the next week, the official declaration of war did not come until 1 August. In the meantime the first armed clashes between the two armies had already taken place in Korea. On land the Sino-Japanese War was essentially a series of defensive battles by the Chinese Imperial Army, fought first in Korea and then in Manchuria and Shantung province within China herself.

The first of these land battles was the battle of Seonghwan, near the city of Asan in Korea, fought over two days, 28–29 July 1894. Numerically



A Japanese woodblock illustration from the Sino-Japanese War shows a Japanese officer leading his men in an assault on a Chinese fort. Although romanticized, the painting does show the mix of weaponry used by the Chinese Imperial Army in 1894–95. The Chinese had imported large numbers of modern Mauser and other rifles during the 1880s but some troops persisted with medieval weapons.

the two armies were evenly matched, with approximately 4,000 men each, but the Japanese had the usual advantage in training, equipment and weaponry. The battle began with a diversionary attack by four companies of Japanese troops. This was followed by the main attack, launched by nine companies of infantry and one of cavalry, and which quickly outflanked the Chinese defences. The Chinese troops, seeing that they were being outflanked, left their defensive positions and fled in the direction of Asan abandoning precious arms and ammunition. When the Japanese pursued the defeated Chinese they found the dispirited defenders of Asan happy to surrender, and they took the city on 29 July. Casualty figures for the battle reflect the imbalance between the two armies with the Japanese losing 34 killed and 54 wounded while the Chinese suffered 500 killed and wounded.

For the next month or so both armies prepared for the next battle, with the Chinese happy to wait behind their defensive positions for the Japanese to attack. The Chinese decided to make their stand against the advancing Japanese at the city of Pyongyong on 15 September. They had an estimated force of 15,000 troops which was divided up into four separate armies, each under its own independent commander. With no unified command and no overall commander-in-chief the defence was destined to be disjointed and poorly organized. Each of the four army commanders was only prepared to take responsibility for his own sector and there was little or no communication between them. When the Imperial Command in Peking did eventually appoint one of the army commanders, General Ye Tsu-ch'ao, as superior commander they chose badly. He was to prove to be incompetent and weak and was given little respect by the other three commanders. During the battle the other army commanders purposely ignored Ye's commands and continued to fight their own individual actions. There was never any question during the battle that the Chinese commanders would attempt to support each other when under attack. They simply stayed inside their defences and waited for the enemy to attack their position. To compound the situation, when they were attacked they did not seek help from the other Chinese armies as they knew that it would be pointless.

As a result, when the Japanese attacked, they were able to capture each position in turn, without interference from the other Chinese forces. The 10,000 attacking Japanese troops soon captured the Chinese redoubts and advanced to take the city. They inflicted heavy casualties on the Chinese defenders with 3,000 killed and 4,000 wounded. Japanese losses were heavier than in previous battles with 102 killed, 433 wounded and 33 missing.

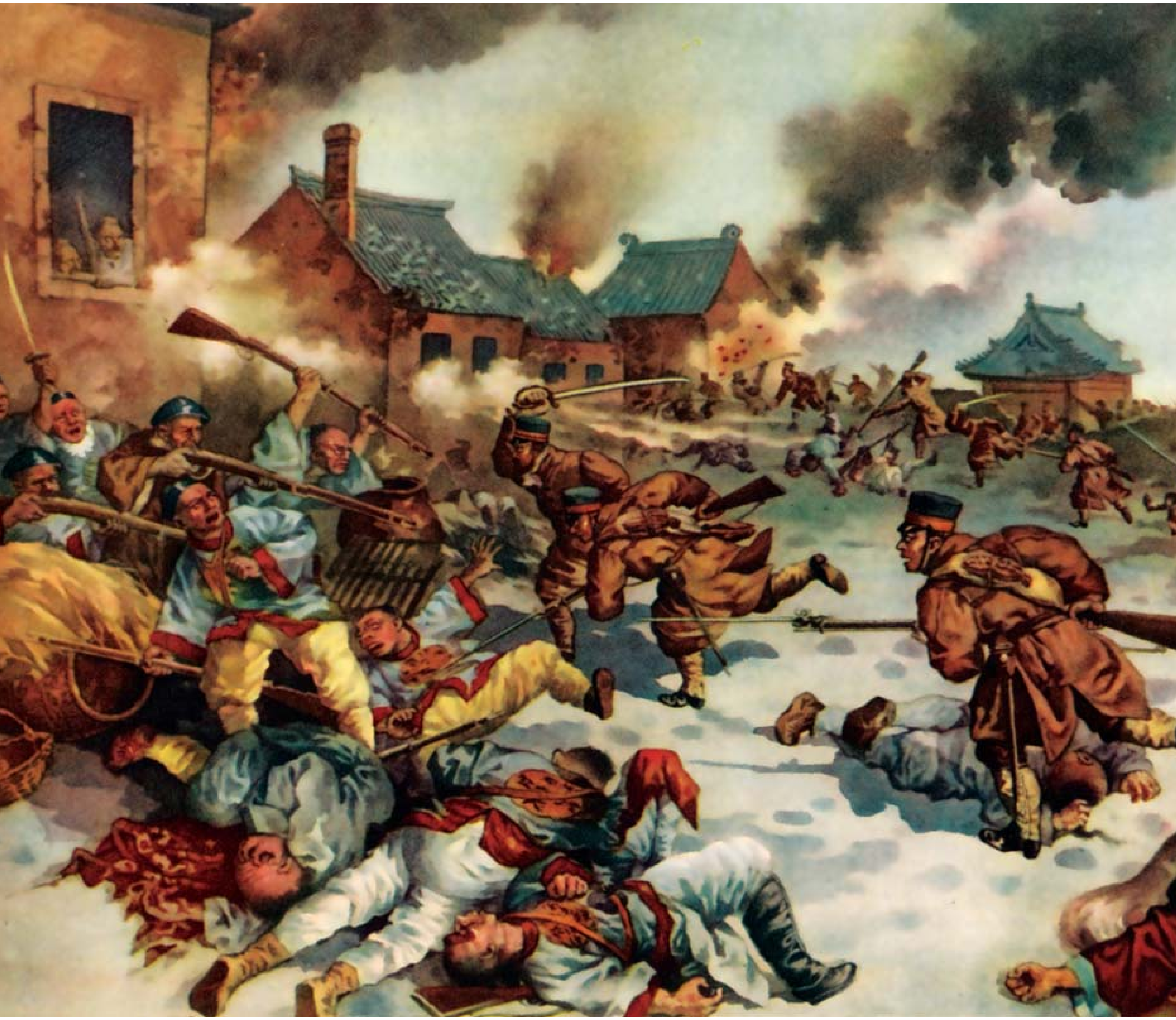
Although the land battles were important to the outcome of the war, it was at sea where the war would effectively be won or lost. On 17 September the decisive naval engagement of the war took place at the mouth of the Yalu River which formed the border between Korea and Imperial China. This battle was planned by the Japanese to open the sea route along the north-eastern coast of the Yellow Sea so that they could bring in reinforcements from Japan. In the early hours of the 17th a Japanese squadron – made up of the battleship *Fuso*, with a displacement of 3,709 tons, eight cruisers, a merchant ship and a coastal defence gunboat – sighted the approaching Chinese Beiyang Fleet. The Chinese ships were returning to Port Arthur having just unloaded reinforcements for the army on the Korean border. The Beiyang Fleet comprised 14 ships – two armoured battleships, the *Tingyuen* and the *Chenyuen*, both 7,430-ton vessels, seven cruisers, one corvette, two gunboats and two torpedo boats. Although the Chinese had the advantage both in tonnage and in firepower, the Japanese ships were faster. The Japanese had another advantage in that they also had a large number of small rapid-firing guns, which could be devastating at close quarters especially against the crews of any unarmoured vessels. The two fleets tried to manoeuvre into battle formation but the Chinese were hampered by confused orders from the flagship which were ignored by several of the ships' captains. The Japanese then moved to attack the Chinese fleet's flank, and the Chinese ships were unable to change formation to counteract the manoeuvre. Unable to bring the big guns of the two battleships to bear on the enemy ships because their smaller ships were in the way, the Chinese were at a great disadvantage. At 12.45pm the Chinese opened fire at 6,000 metres and the two fleets exchanged salvoes until sunset when both sides disengaged. Losses were heavy on both sides with the Beiyang Fleet losing five ships sunk and three damaged with 850 crewmen killed and 500 wounded. Two of the Chinese ships with wooden hulls and metal deck plating burst into flames, which was blamed at the time on the many layers of varnish which had been applied to the ships over the years. During the battle the lack of gunnery practice by the Chinese crews and the shortage of shells for the ships' guns hampered them. The German, British and other foreign advisors aboard the Chinese ships, were credited at the time for extracting the fleet before it suffered even more damage. Both battleships, the *Tingyuen* and *Chenyuen*, escaped with some damage and sailed with the other surviving ships back to Port Arthur. Although at the time the battle was claimed as a great Japanese victory, they also suffered heavy losses with four ships damaged and 400 men killed or wounded. The Beiyang Fleet repaired its ships in Port Arthur in Manchuria before sailing for the port of Weihaiwei in Shantung province. There, in a well-protected harbour, it was relatively safe from Japanese naval attacks. Its commander laid a strong protective curtain of mines around the port and prepared to wait out the war.

After the defeat of the Chinese land forces at Pyongyong, the Japanese 1st Army Corps moved northwards towards the Yalu River – the border between China and Korea. The Chinese had decided not to try and stop the Japanese on the south bank of the Yalu and prepared strong defences on the Chinese side of the river. Estimates of the Chinese strength in their defensive position at Jiuliancheng vary between 15,000 and 23,000, while the Japanese had 10,000 men. The Chinese had been busy building strong defence works with over 100 redoubts prepared under the orders of General Sung-ching. Although the Chinese had also positioned strong forces on their flanks, the Japanese were able to cross the Yalu by pontoon bridge undetected on 24 October. On the 25th at 5.00pm, the Japanese stormed the Chinese defences and heavy fighting took place until 10.30pm when the Chinese withdrew. Casualty figures for this encounter are varied with the Japanese claiming to have only suffered four dead and 140 wounded while the Chinese lost 2,000 killed. As was usual the Japanese probably underestimated their losses for propaganda purposes while exaggerating those of the Chinese.

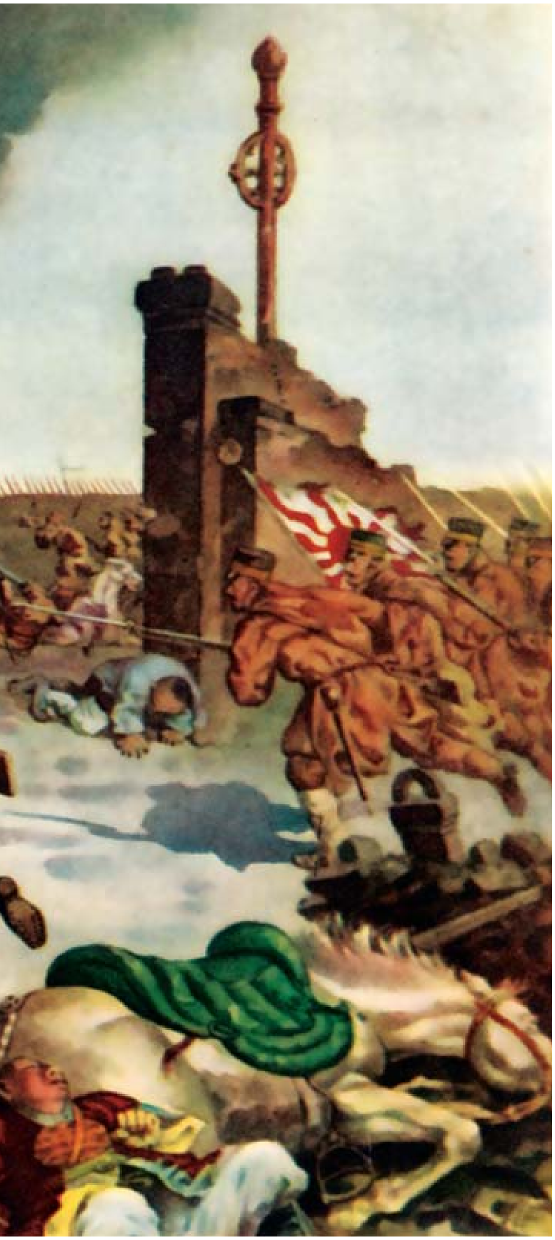
Having taken the Jiuliancheng positions the Japanese 1st Army Corps divided in two with one force pursuing the retreating Chinese while the other continued its advance into Manchuria and towards the city of Mukden. Their advance continued throughout November and December with further defeats of Chinese forces, usually of several thousand troops fighting from behind well-prepared defensive works. The lack of organization by the Chinese stopped any concentration of larger forces which might have exploited their numerical advantage. One larger force of 10,000 Chinese troops was defeated on 18 December by a smaller Japanese force from the 2nd Division. The 2nd Division then continued their advance in terrible winter conditions towards Mukden.

In the meantime the Japanese 2nd Army Corps, made up of the 5th Division with the 6th and 12th brigades, landed near the Manchurian port of Port Arthur in October. The port was well defended by several large forts and the first Japanese attacks were easily thrown back by the 13,000 Chinese defenders. In a series of night and day attacks against the main forts on 21 October, the 15,000 Japanese gradually wore the Chinese down, inflicting 4,500 casualties. During the night of 21–22 October most of the Chinese garrison withdrew, leaving behind the 57 large- and 163 small-calibre fortress guns. The Japanese claimed that when they tried to enter the city on 24 October they were fired on by Chinese soldiers in civilian clothing. Although the Japanese claimed rather optimistically to have only suffered 29 killed they were met with a gruesome display when entering the city: hanging from trees and the fortress walls were the heads and mutilated corpses of some of their comrades who had been taken prisoner. This enraged the already frustrated soldiers, who perpetrated a well-documented massacre of the civilian population and any captured Chinese soldiers. They were reported to have killed any Chinese that they could although the atrocities were hushed up at the time.

After a lull in the fighting during the worst of the winter of 1894–95, the Japanese prepared to finish the war as soon as possible. The Japanese plan was to nullify the still-strong Beiyang Fleet at anchor at Weihaiwei, therefore cutting the supply lines to any remaining land forces in the theatre. The Japanese 2nd Division of the 2nd Army Corps, along with the most of the 6th Division, was landed by ship on the coast of Shantung province in late January 1895. Their objective, Weihaiwei, was in the far north-east of the province where the Beiyang Fleet was well protected by the guns of the port's strong forts, a minefield and a boom across the entrance to the harbour. The Japanese now split their land force of



20,000 soldiers with 10,000 porters into two to advance on Weihaiwei. They were to advance in two columns from the north and the south and planned to rendezvous at the port in early February. Both Japanese forces encountered heavy Chinese resistance to their advances as they were now moving through a province in the heart of China. When the Japanese



In this Japanese propaganda picture from the Sino-Japanese War an assault is made against a Chinese-held village. The Japanese were brutal in their portrayal of their Chinese enemy, depicting the defenders with grotesque features. There is little doubt that the Japanese in 1894–95 were better armed and trained than their adversaries; however, Chinese defeats were caused by bad leadership and poor organization, not by cowardice as illustrated here.

finally arrived at Weihaiwei on 30 January they were faced by the landward-facing guns of the port's 'impregnable' forts. The forts had been designed by German military architects and armed with 168 of the latest Krupp and Armstrong guns. At first the port's garrison put up a stubborn resistance to the Japanese attacks but after eight hours of continuous Japanese infantry assaults the resolve of the defenders was broken. When the Japanese attacked again on 2 February they found that the forts had been abandoned by their defenders. With the forts now in Japanese hands and manned by their own gun crews the situation of the 16 Chinese ships in the harbour was impossible. To make matters worse, the Japanese Navy had used the panic caused by the land fighting to penetrate the harbour's boom and several of their gunboats attacked the Chinese fleet. Earnest appeals were sent by the Japanese commander to the Chinese Admiral Ting Ju-ch'ang to surrender. These appeals had to be answered by the admiral's Scottish advisor as Ting and the other senior admiral of the fleet had already committed ritual suicide. The commanders of the port's fortresses had also killed themselves, knowing the fate that awaited them if they returned in shame to Peking. The two battleships of the Beiyang Fleet were sunk during the fighting with the Japanese in the harbour. A flotilla of Chinese gunboats which tried to escape from the port during the fight also suffered the same fate. With the devastating loss of the Beiyang Fleet and the continuing set backs on land it was now only a matter of time before the Qing court admitted defeat.

There was, however, still one large Imperial Chinese force – 40,000 strong – in the south of Manchuria. This force was split to garrison the two cities of Niuzhuang and Liaoyang on the Liaodong Pennisula to the north of Port Arthur. Liu Kun-yi, a high-ranking Qing official who insisted on prolonging the war against Japan, now took charge of these troops. He ordered a 16,000-strong attack against Japanese forces holding the city of Haicheng on 16 February. Liu wanted the Chinese to abandon their previous defensive tactics and take the war to the Japanese. When the attack was launched it was a chaotic, badly organized affair by a mix of infantry and large numbers of poorly trained irregular cavalry. The Chinese attack was repulsed by the Japanese and many of Liu's troops then began to desert after hearing the news of the fall of Weihaiwei. A Japanese counter-attack pushed the remaining Imperial troops back into the cities they had previously held. The two cities, Niuzhuang and Liaoyang, were both taken by the Japanese by 4 March. This final defeat for the Chinese was the last straw for the Imperial forces and the fighting in the Sino-Japanese War was effectively over.

One of the main objectives of the Japanese during the war was the conquest of the Chinese-held Pescadores Islands. These islands off the coast of Formosa were claimed by the Japanese and they were determined that they would gain control of them before any peace treaty was signed. A 5,500-strong expeditionary force was landed on the coast of one of the islands on 23 March 1895 and was confronted by a 5,000-strong defending force. Nonetheless, by the 26th the Chinese had been defeated with heavy losses. The Japanese lost 1,500, but these deaths were due to an outbreak of cholera as opposed to casualties in battle.

The Shimonoseki Peace Treaty, which ended the Sino-Japanese War, was signed in Japan on 17 April 1895. It conditions were severe for the Chinese who had to cede Formosa, the Penghu Islands and the Liaodong Peninsula to the Japanese. On 23 April however Russia, Germany and France interceded on China's behalf and insisted that the Liaodong Penninsula and Port Arthur should be returned to them. Japan was unable to resist the pressure from three of Europe's most powerful nations and without support from the USA or Great Britain agreed to withdraw from Port Arthur. China still had to pay Japan 34,000,000 taels of silver which was equivalent to over five times Japan's annual revenue as war reparations. The intervention by the European powers was a purely selfish act, especially on the part of Russia which in 1898 signed a 25-year lease on the Liaodong Peninsula. They built a large naval base at Port Arthur, much to the disgust of the Japanese, who took it back during the subsequent Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05. The other European powers used Imperial China's weakness to gain port and trade concessions in China. These included the British at Weihaiwei, the French at Kwang-Chou-Wan and the Germans at Kiachow and Tsingtao. The military cost for Japan was an officially admitted 1,005 killed and 4,922 wounded although 16,866 died of various diseases during the war. Chinese losses from battlefield casualties alone were estimated at the time to be approximately 35,000 dead and wounded.

The Performance of the Chinese Imperial Army in 1894–95

China's defeat in the war with Japan was ridiculed by many in the West with the performance of the Imperial Army and Navy subjected to particular scorn. A quote by a Western eyewitness below sums up the view of many on the Imperial Army in 1894. The female eyewitness saw a column of Chinese troops marching through Mukden on their way to Korea and noted:

> They looked the losers, they would be, their clothes were stagey and unserviceable – loose fitting red jackets, blue or apricot trousers, boots of thick black cotton cloth, their weapons were of mainly historical value – muzzle loading muskets, spears and bayonets, and their general implements were medieval.[2]

She further commented that 'It was nothing but murder to send thousands of men so armed to meet the Japanese'. Other commentators noted how brand-new Krupp mountain guns were positioned next to groups of soldiers with bows and arrows and spears. In battle they were also ridiculed for their habit of firing off all their ammunition at the Japanese and then withdrawing. A Belgian observer noted the Chinese had 'modern rifles but without the correct bullets, deadly looking swords which turned out to be made of tin and shells filled with coal dust or sawdust'. He also noted that some of the artillery's cannon balls were made from mortar but painted to look real in genuine in case an high-ranking officer inspected their stores. The Chinese soldiers who had rifles were given little or no instruction in their use and one observer in 1895 noted that during what passed for target practice they were allowed to fire off 10 rounds. He

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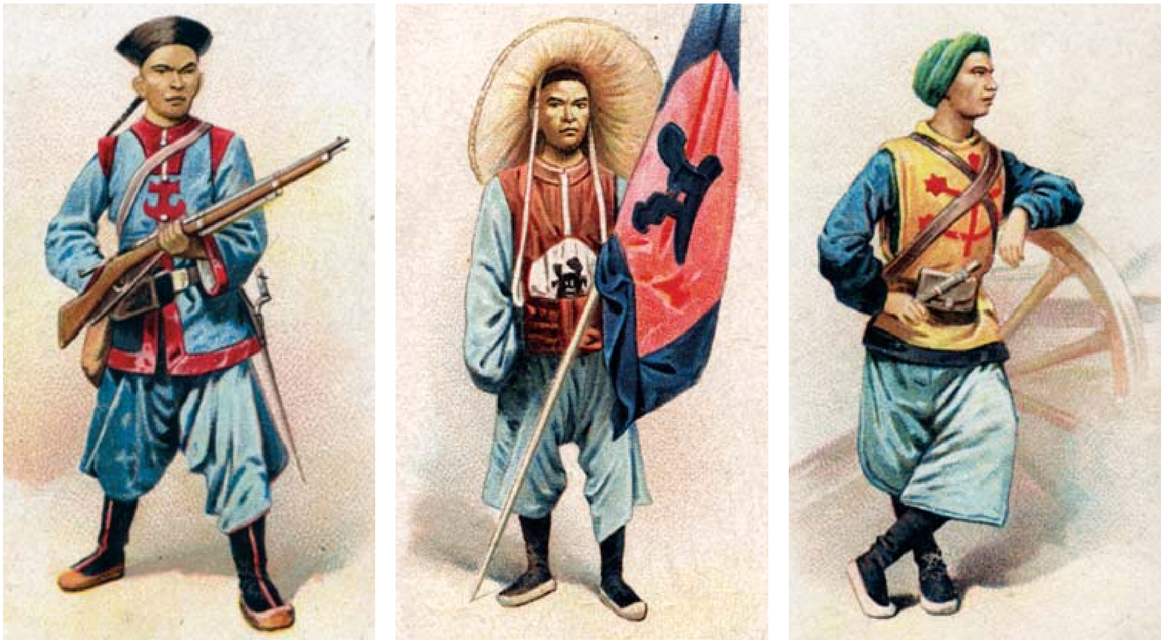
[2] Taken from *Grey River Argus Newspaper* (1894).



These three cigarette cards from the 1895 period show three variations on the uniforms worn by the Chinese Imperial Army in the First Sino-Japanese War. The first figure is an infantryman armed with a 1871 Mauser rifle while the second is a unit flag bearer from the late 1880s. The third figure is an artilleryman whose uniform was featured in several press illustrations of the 1894–95 war.

watched as all the men took it in turns to fire at a target 200 paces away without any of them hitting it once. A Russian Imperial officer serving on the Sino-Russian border in 1894 also reported on the poor marksmanship of the Chinese soldiers he saw in their barracks just before the war:

> Some of the soldiers outside were shooting at a target 200 paces distant. Each man fired ten shots without hitting the mark more than once. A Chinese officer, in explanation of the poor marksmanship stated that the soldiers were all young recruits, but asked the writer, what can be expected of them if they are not given any instruction by their officers. He also said that archery which forms part of the technical education of Chinese officers, was much more popular and all ranks excelled in this exercise.[3]

Morale during the war had been poor in most units which was not helped by the fact that the troops had not been paid for a long time. Their officers did not know how to handle their troops and the higher-ranking older officers still thought that they could fight a war as they had in the 1860s. As a result of poor morale the use of opium and other narcotics was rife throughout the army. However, some units fought with great courage

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[3] *Bay of Plenty Times* (June 1894).

THE REPUBLIC OF FORMOSA

Under the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki the large island of Formosa over the Formosan Straits from mainland China was ceded to the Japanese Empire. When news of its handing over to Japan reached the island the native Hakki people and the Chinese Qing administration were horrified. After consulting with various parties they proclaimed the island a republic independent of both Imperial China and the Japanese Empire on 23 May 1895. Although the island's leadership were made up mostly of Qing officials they for once had common cause with the native Formosans. The Formosans had no desire to swap Chinese control of their island for that of another foreign imperial power. They were under no illusions, however, that the Japanese would come in force to take their newly awarded territory. Republican forces were raised to join with the Imperial garrison already on the island, creating a total force of 75,000 men. The Imperial troops were well armed with modern rifles while many of the Formosans were armed only with traditional bows and spears. The Qing troops were divided into three forces, with 20,000 in the south of the island near to the republic's capital, Tainan; 30,000 in the north under the command of a Chinese Admiral Yang; and 10,000 troops in the centre of the island. When the Japanese Expeditionary Force of 7,000 men landed on 29 May, several of the republic's leaders fled to the mainland. Other Qing officials, like newly promoted Brigadier-General Liu Yong-fu, took a full part in the island's defence. The resistance to the Japanese was fierce and they soon had to bring in reinforcements which increased their strength to 37,000. In a series of battles the Formosans were defeated by the Japanese but their guerrillas hit the Japanese supply lines as they advanced towards the capital. The Japanese answered the Formosan resistance with brutal reprisals which often involved the slaughter of whole Hakki villages. In the largest of the battles fought during the Japanese conquest at Baguashan, the Formosans were reinforced by the elite Black Flag troops of General Liu. Their defeat by the Japanese should have ended the war but guerrilla fighting continued. Eventually, after five months of fighting, the Japanese approached Tainan, which fell on 21 October 1895. The day before it fell, General Liu escaped by boat to the Chinese mainland having stayed as long as the resistance continued. With the fall of their capital the republicans had to surrender having lost 14,000 men during the fighting. There now began five decades of Japanese rule over the island which lasted until their defeat in the Second World War. Low-level guerrilla resistance to the occupation continued for many years and always met with the same brutal response from the Japanese. Post-1945 and the eventual victory of the People's Liberation Army anti-Communist forces retreated to the island. Today Taiwan remains an independent, democratic state.

despite the hopeless situation in which they often found themselves. Eyewitnesses said that in hand-to-hand combat the Chinese soldier was more than an equal to the slighter-built Japanese soldier.

THE CHINESE IMPERIAL ARMY 1895–1900

After the humiliating defeat of the Imperial Army and Navy in 1894–95, the Qing dynasty looked at ways to modernize their land forces. A few semi-independent armies were set up by individual commanders who wanted to create European-style formations. One such army was Yuan Shi-kai's Pacification Army which had been formed in 1894 but was re-organized again after China's defeat. Yuan – who was to become the dominant military man in China in the next decade – formed his 7,000-strong army into five infantry battalions and four cavalry troops, with small units of artillery and engineers. In 1897 a 'Self-Strengthening Army' was formed by General Chang Chih-tung and was organized into ten infantry battalions, each with 500 men, and two 180-strong cavalry units. He had a strong artillery branch with two battalions each having four batteries and he also had two engineer units which were trained by German instructors. Other modernized armies included General Sung Ch'iang's 'Resolute Army' and General Nieh Shih-ch'eng's 'Tenacious Army'. All these armies imported weapons from Europe to equip their men, with Mauser M1871s and Mannilicher M1895s being the favourite models.

The 80,000-strong formation of traditional Bannermen was still very much part of the Chinese military before 1900 and were described as 'Splendid, but ill-trained' by one unnamed commentator. When describing the Bannermen as 'splendid' he may have been dazzled by the many standards still carried by these soldiers at this point in time. Each Banner of roughly 10,000 men was signified by a different coloured standard. The first four Banners had flags coloured yellow, blue, red and white while the other four had the same four coloured flags but bordered in one of the other colours. Borders around the 5th to 8th Banner standards were 'broad enough to make them conspicuous'.

Lord Charles Beresford who wrote a study on the possibility of European domination of China in 1899 noted that 'Apart from one division under the command of General Yuan Shi-kai of 7,500 men the entire Chinese Army of 200,000 is practically useless.' He also commented on the variety of rifles in use with the Imperial Army:

> During my visit to the different armies I counted in the ranks fourteen different rifles. Three different patterns of Mauser rifles, Martini Henry, Winchester repeating, Mannilicher, Remington, Peabody Henry, Sneider, Enfield, Berdan and Tower muskets.[4]

The Tower muskets were in fact smooth-bores dating back to the Napoleonic Wars. Soldiers were also seen practicing firing bow and arrows without any real concern if they hit the target or not. An observer noted

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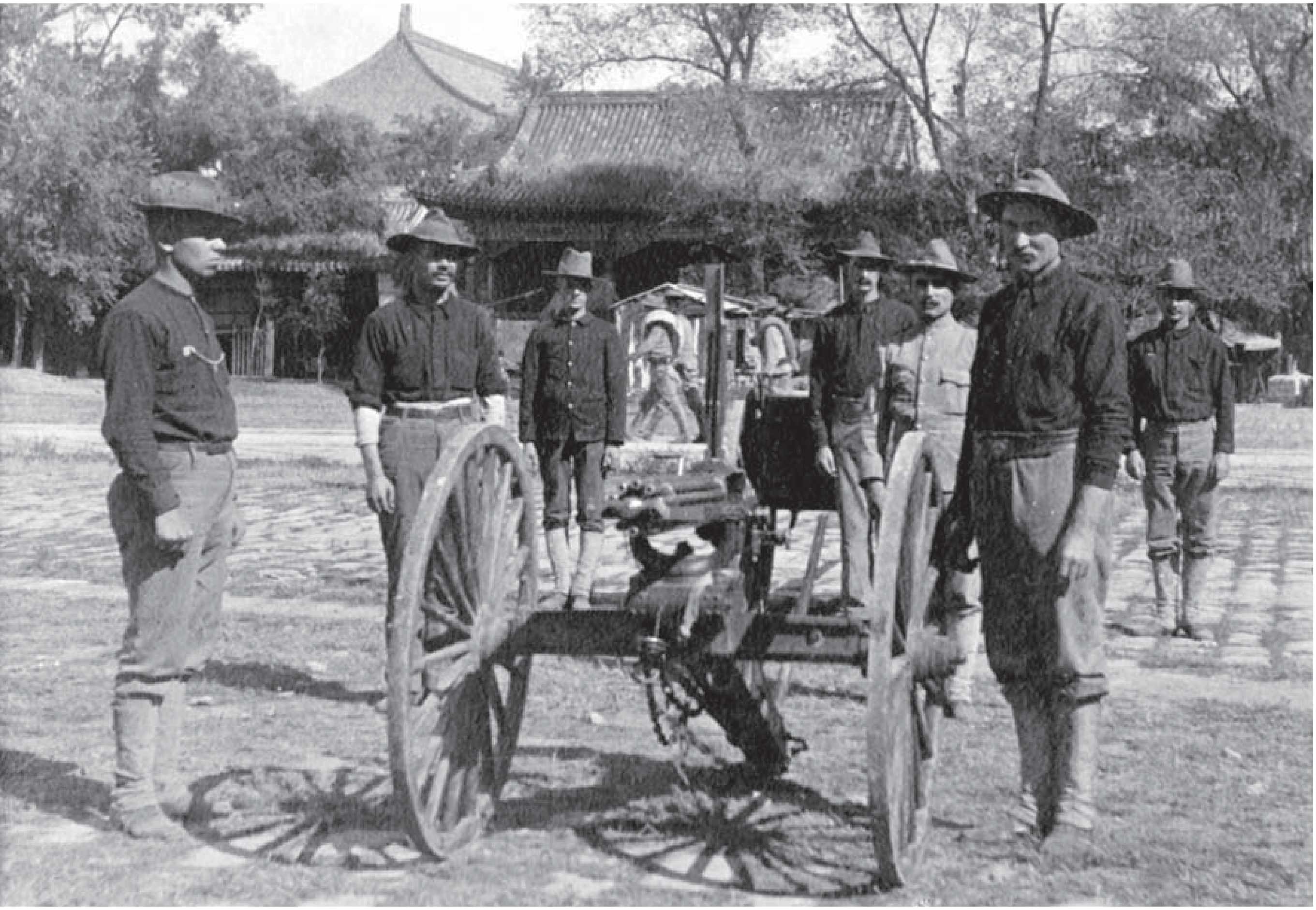
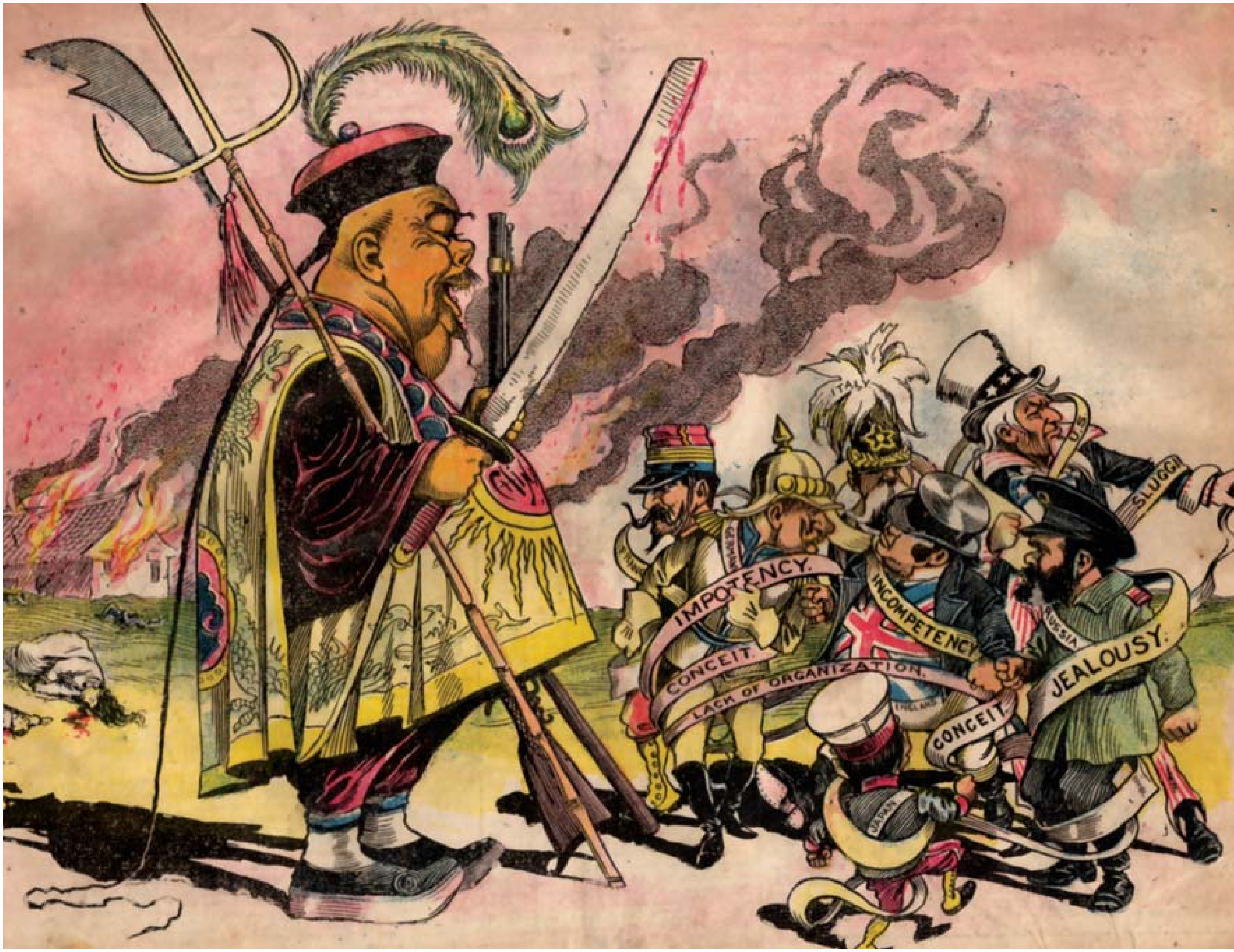
[4] Lord Charles Beresford, *The Break-up of China* (1899).



A Gatling gun crew of the US Army drilling in the grounds of the American Legation in the months before the Boxer Rebellion. All legations in Peking had their own guard forces which were considerably strengthened in light of the threat from the Boxers in the months leading up to the siege of 1900. At the time of the siege the US legation guard was made up of Marine detachments from two ships totalling 48 Marines and five sailors.

that 'The real merit consists in the position and attitude of the bowmen when discharging his shaft'. In other words if the bowmen looked the part when practicing, whether the arrow hit the target was irrelevant. Beresford also commented on the endemic corruption in the Chinese Army and reported a conversation he had with a military commander in Peking, who claimed to have 10,000 men under his command, but in fact had only 800. He was however being paid to feed and clothe his full complement of 10,000 and was simply pocketing the money for the phantom 9,200! When asked how he dealt with any routine inspections of his unit he admitted that he simply hired thousands of unskilled manual labourers to appear on parade for the day at 5 pennies per man while simultaneously bribing the inspecting officer to report back to headquarters that he had inspected 10,000 professional soldiers. Another Englishman,



An American cartoon from July 1900 shows a well-armed giant China about to slaughter the squabbling and helpless powers tied up by their problems. The original caption to the cartoon reads 'Modern Civilization Helpless Before the Chinese Giant' and beneath it reads 'China – Great Confucius! And Are These the Puny Fellows I've Been Afraid of So Long?'.

Lieutenant-Colonel Coates, who served as an advisor in the Imperial Army was less scathing. He described the 1,150-strong brigade at Tientsin which he had been involved with as having some very good soldiers. The horse battery of Russian-made guns attached to the 2nd Battalion Brigade came in for particular praise. He said 'The way the battery manoeuvred would have done credit to any army'.[5] As with all aspects of the Imperial Chinese Army of the late 1800s the performance of their artillery could vary from unit to unit. For instance during one artillery drill a modern

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[5] Lieutenant-Colonel Coates, *China & The Open Door* (London, 1899).

Krupp 12-inch field gun blew up killing 30 men. When the incident was investigated, it turned out that the shell had been filled with sub-standard Chinese powder. With such poorly implemented modernization efforts it was little wonder that China's military record in the final years of the 19th century was so dire.

THE HUNDRED DAYS' REFORM

After the humiliation of the Sino-Japanese War, it was clear that the endemic corruption of Imperial China had contributed greatly to the defeat. In June 1898 Emperor Kuang Hsu bravely tried to introduce a number of reforms which he intended would bring China into the modern world. The 40 edicts issued by the emperor included the modernization of the archaic Imperial exam system that rewarded skills like calligraphy and poetry, regarded as more worthy than more practical ones which might have actually been useful to a modern state. Other practical changes were to include the banning of the foot binding for women and girls and the introduction of a national currency to replace provincial ones. The reforms introduced by the emperor were not only far-reaching but also far too radical for many in the Imperial establishment. In view of the recent defeat of China by Japan, the state of Imperial China's army and navy was covered by the edicts. It was widely known, for instance, that most of the funding available for the building of a modern navy had gone into the rebuilding of the Empress Dowager T'su-hsi's Summer Palace. Emperor Kuang Hsu ordered that 34 modern warships be built for the navy, either constructed in local shipyards or ordered from a number of European shipbuilders. Modern naval academies were to be set up in coastal and river provinces to crew the new ships. When it came to the discredited Imperial Army his reforms included the standardization of modern drill in regular units. The militia – which up to this time had been of little use to China's defence – were to be given better training. Their troops were also expected to have better discipline so that they were less of a problem for the civilian population. Bows and arrows, spears and swords were to replaced by modern rifles in all regular and irregular formations – and as if to prove his point the first 2,000 Mauser rifles were already rolling off the production line at the Hanyang arsenal.

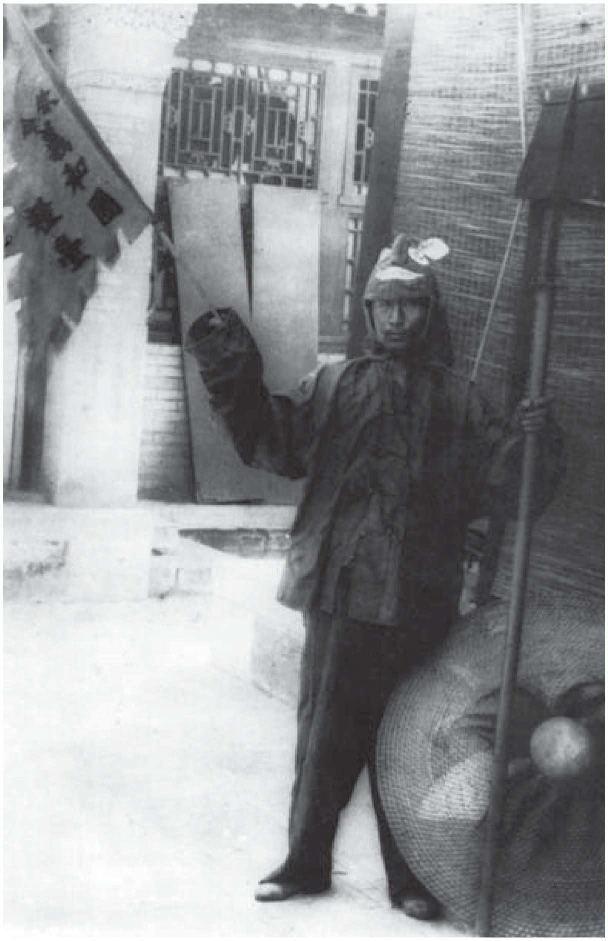
In the short hundred days that the new reform programme ran, some progress was made with the army. The emperor tried to impress the empress

Boxer prisoners taken by US Marines are held in a compound after the relief of Peking by the International Expeditionary Corps on 14 August 1900. These Boxers may have shared the fate of many after the defeat of the rebellion when the foreign military contingents executed them in large numbers. Others were executed by the Imperial Chinese authorities at the insistence of the occupying powers.

dowager with his reforms and even took her to review units of the 'new' improved army. Unfortunately for the emperor and for China the empress dowager – the real power behind the throne – was unimpressed. She disagreed with almost all the reforms, both civil and military, and believed that the emperor was under the influence of advisors who in turn were in the pay of foreign powers. On 19 September the empress dowager and her supporters struck in a *coup d'état* in Peking. The emperor was placed under house arrest and six of his chief advisors were swiftly executed. A statement was issued that the emperor had asked the empress dowager to re-take office on his behalf. She now made it perfectly clear that she was back in charge of China's government. Any modernization of China's civil or military life would be done at her slow pace or not at all.

THE BOXER REBELLION

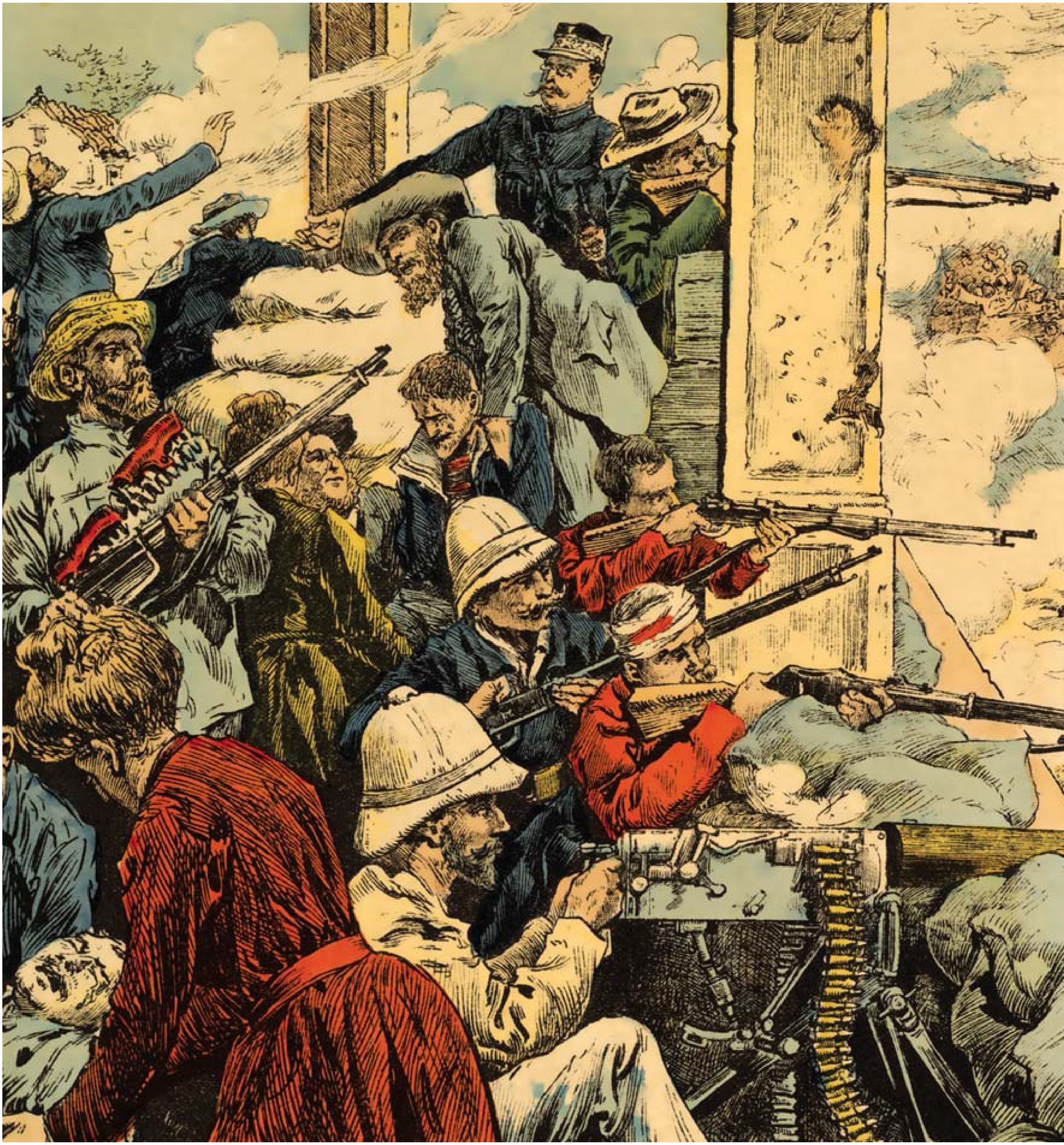
At the turn of the 20th century, the Chinese people were proud of their long and illustrious history, but dismayed and humiliated by their country's domination by the European powers over the latter half of the 19th century. Although the ordinary people were preoccupied with day-to-day survival, the more influential members of society were increasingly looking for a way to challenge the Europeans. A few years after the end of the Sino-Japanese War an opportunity arose in the form of a group of societies which had sprang up in China in the 19th century. Formed in 1898 in Shantung province, Yi Ha Tuan – the Society of Patriotic Harmonious Fists – was one of several organizations formed to promote the joys of physical exercise. Because the main exercises done by its members involved martial arts using the hands, the society's members became known in the West as the 'Boxers'. The Boxers had been committing a number of outrages for several years especially in their power base in Shantung province. A large number of Christian missionaries had been killed, often under brutal circumstances, although it was the Chinese Christian converts who suffered the most. All over northern and central China the troubles were used as an excuse to attack Chinese Christians, with a reported 32,000 killed in the north-west alone.

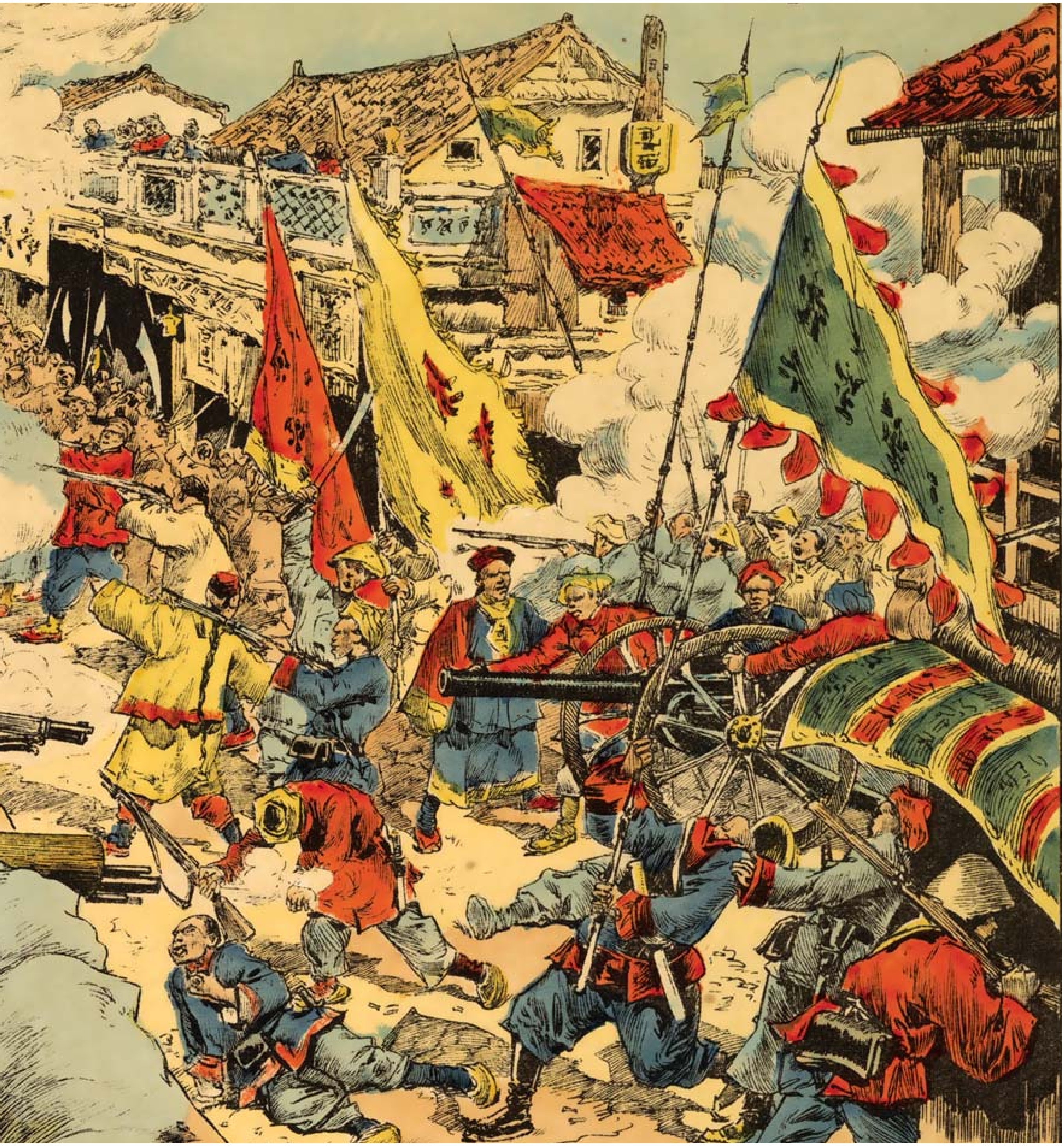


This photograph of a Boxer in 1900 is probably staged to show the world press what the rebels looked like. He is wearing civilian clothing with a tiger headdress and is armed with a bamboo spear with crude spear point and has a bamboo shield. The shield would have given little protection against the rifles and machine guns of the Allied troops.

Employing their love of physical pursuits as an excuse to gather and train in public, the Boxers soon developed into a secret organization. Its aim was the expulsion of all foreigners from China and the expulsion or killing of any Chinese Christian converts. With their headquarters in Peking the Boxers had managed to convince several of the Imperial court to become secret members of the society. At first the Boxers had been opposed to the Qing dynasty and had ridiculed the Imperial government for allowing the foreign exploitation of China. Fully aware of the danger that the Boxers posed to the Imperial throne, the empress dowager began to secretly give them her support. Once the Boxers realized that the empress dowager was as anti-foreign as they were, there was no reason to attack the Qing dynasty. The Boxers began to gain more and more support both in the countryside and in the cities, but it was in urban areas where they had most members. In particular they recruited amongst the rural poor who had travelled to the large cities looking for employment. When they discovered that there were no jobs and blamed foreign businesses for the lack of employment they were easily persuaded to join the local Boxer group.

The exact number of Boxers involved in the subsequent 1900 rebellion was not recorded, and the irregular nature of the force did not allow for an accurate count. There were certainly several hundred thousand, organized usually at community level with each village providing between 25 and 100 volunteers. Towns and cities provided





Previous page
A fanciful illustration from a 1900 French magazine shows the defence of the foreign legations in Peking by a mixed civilian and military force. The siege of the legations was ineffectively led and the attacking Chinese soldiers and militia were divided and did not co-ordinate their assaults upon the defences. Included in the firepower of the legations were three machine guns and two artillery pieces, one improvised from various scrapped field pieces.

more men and these would have been organized on a district level. Each Boxer unit was under the command of a 'senior brother disciple' who was usually chosen because of his strength and his skill at martial arts. Although the Boxers were supposed to reject modern weapons, some were armed with rifles and revolvers stolen or traded from the Imperial Army. The vast majority, however, were armed with spears, tridents, swords and other edged weapons.

Eight hundred training centres were set up, mainly in Shantung province, to teach the Boxers to box as well as other martial arts. Any military training was minimal and in most actions they relied on strength of numbers to overcome their enemies. They claimed to be immune to bullets and helped to promote the myth by sometimes replacing Imperial Army cartridges with blanks before staging an encounter. Massed charges of Boxers armed only with swords and spears were of course decimated by the accurate rifle and machine-gun fire of European troops. According to eyewitness reports, the Boxer leaders would be exhorting their men to attack while performing ritual dancing and chanting, performing these rituals under fire while their men – who they had promised to make immune to bullets – were shot around them. As with all attacks by poorly armed fanatics against well-armed men, unless they could overwhelm the enemy by sheer weight of numbers the Boxers were doomed to failure. Nonetheless, the rebellion would force official Chinese forces into direct action against the European forces present in the capital city – Peking.

The Siege of the Peking Legations 1900

In 1900, the foreign legations in the Chinese capital Peking had been under pressure for several months. Reports of massacres of Chinese Christians and European missionaries by the Boxers had been received with alarm in the foreign community. Although on the surface the diplomatic life of the city went on, behind the scenes the staff of the legations were preparing for the worst. Every time an outrage occurred somewhere in China, the Imperial court would send assurances to the foreign ministers in the legations, telling them that these were just local disturbances and that the situation would soon be sorted out.

The foreign communities in Peking were protected by their own legation guards of soldiers, marines or sailors. These were normally strictly limited in number but, due to the threat of Boxer attacks, the various foreign ministers in the legations had been able to gain Imperial government permission to slightly increase the size of their guards. The

Boxer threat was also countered, it was hoped, by the assembling of an international fleet off the Chinese coastline near to the Taku Forts in May 1900. This fleet had aboard a number of marine contingents from various nations which could be landed if the situation deteriorated in Peking.

In early June the British minister in Peking, Sir Claude MacDonald, contacted the British commander of the Allied troops, Admiral Sir Edmund Seymour, to send a relief force to Peking. Sir Claude and the other diplomats now realized that the civilians had to evacuated from Peking as soon as possible. While the relief force was fighting its way to Peking against Chinese opposition, the Chinese issued an ultimatum on 19 June for all foreigners to leave Peking. The next day the empress dowager decided to declare war on the Allied powers and at 4.00pm the Chinese started firing on the legations.

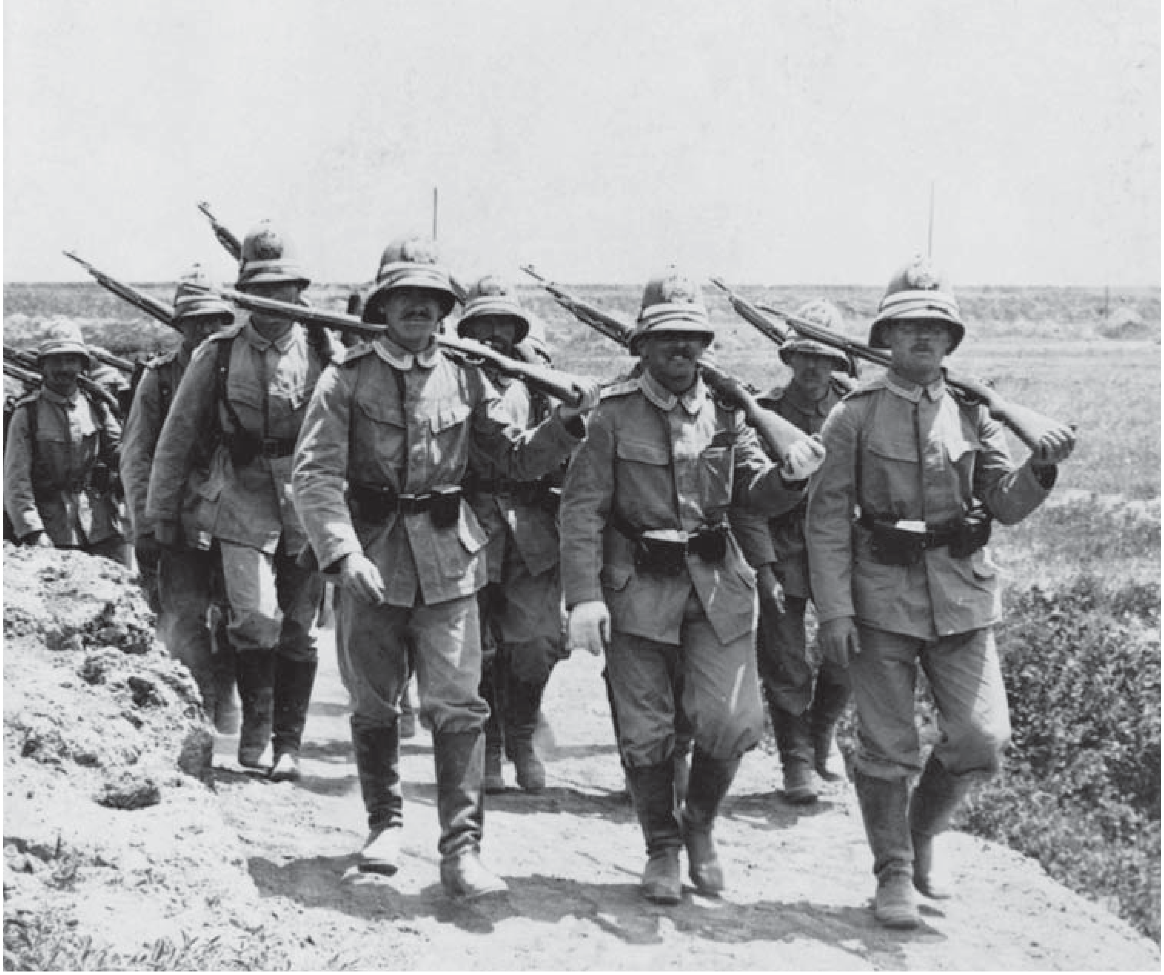
As part of her declaration of war, the empress stated the reasons behind her decision:

> The foreigners have been aggressive towards us, infringed upon our territorial integrity, trampled our people under their feet… They oppress our people and blaspheme our gods. The common people have suffered greatly at their hands, and each one of them is vengeful.

When the siege began the legations' total defence force including officers and men was 543 with 56 US Marines, 82 British marines, three sailors and three visiting officers, 35 Austro-Hungarian sailors, 47 French sailors and one marine officer, 29 Italian sailors, 52 German marines, 26 Japanese marines and two visiting officers and finally 74 Russian sailors, seven Cossacks and a visiting officer. In addition, once the siege began, a volunteer unit of 125 was formed from the civilian population of the legation quarter. Weaponry was limited to the rifles of the legation guards plus some shotguns, a few machine guns – a US Colt Type 95, a British Nordenfelt and an unknown Austro-Hungarian model – and some artillery: two guns, an Italian 1-pounder and an 'international' gun made up of pieces of several scrapped artillery pieces.

The siege – which was to last a total of 55 days – was initially undertaken by Boxer forces alone but they were soon joined by regular Imperial troops. At times the Chinese artillery recently bought from Germany was firing at point-blank range against the walls of the legations. Not all Imperial officers, however, were in favour of the attacks and the Chinese commander Jung-lu was rumoured to have allowed food supplies through the front lines at times. Other reports indicated that some very competent Imperial artillery officers seemed to fire their guns too high on many occasions. Massed attacks by the poorly armed irregular Boxers and other volunteers proved unsuccessful against the professional forces defending the legations. Imperial troops were held back from these infantry attacks and their officers were only too happy to let the Boxers do the fighting. Various tactics were used by the besiegers, including trying to burn the legation buildings down in the first days of the siege and mining underneath the walls. One of the biggest crises came at the end of June, when the Tartar Wall above the legations was captured by the Chinese. Its occupation allowed the Chinese forces to fire down directly into the legations and would have ended the siege. However, a night attack by just

These marching German marines of an Imperial Navy *Seebataillon* or 'Sea Battalion' were part of the international force in China in 1900. Fifty-one marines of the 111. Seebataillon fought as part of the Peking legations' defences and were joined in August by elements of the 1. and 11. Seebataillone. The two extra battalions were employed in the subduing of the Chinese population after the defeat of the Boxers.



a handful of US and British troops surprised the Chinese sentries and regained the wall on 3 July. A truce agreed on 16 July allowed both sides to recover and was especially timely for the legations. It came just a few days after a mine had been exploded underneath the French Legation, almost destroying it. By the time of the truce only two-thirds of the legations guards were left and several of the best commanders had been killed. By late July, when news began to arrive at the legations of the progress of the relief expedition morale rose. The Chinese Imperial Army was also aware of the imminent arrival of the International Relief Force and they began to limit their attacks to the odd badly aimed salvo from their artillery. The legations were finally relieved on 15 August but the defenders had paid a heavy price. Of the soldiers, marines and sailors defending the legations, 55 had been killed and 135 wounded. This was an astounding casualty rate of 46.5 per cent and was testament to their bravery although to this figure was added the 13 civilians who were killed along with 24 wounded. Most of the civilian casualties were amongst the volunteers who manned the defences alongside the legation guards.

On 10 June, ten days before the siege in Peking officially began, Seymour's relief force had left Tientsin in five trains crammed full with 2,100 soldiers and sailors, seven field guns and eight machine guns. When the relief force set off its mission was still simply to evacuate the civilians from Peking and to engage any Chinese forces that tried to stop them in that task. The plan was to race across the 80 miles of railway between Tientsin and Peking and arrive hopefully in Peking by nightfall. They knew that there were large formations of Boxers in their path but there were also Imperial regular troops as well. These well-trained and armed regular troops were under the command of General Nieh Shi-ch'eng who had given his backing to the Boxers. At first the relief force made steady progress although there were signs that there had been attempts to burn railway sleepers along the way. About halfway to Peking they came across a length of track that had been torn up by the Boxers and the trains had to stop. Word was sent back to Tientsin that they might need help and defensive positions were established around the trains. It would take an estimated three days to repair the track and although a few hundred Boxers did attack the force these attacks were easily repulsed. When it was discovered that the tracks to their south were now damaged Seymour decided that the best option was to go back to Tientsin by river, leaving a German force to guard the trains. As the relief force moved aboard captured junks towards Tientsin the Germans left behind came under

These Chinese soldiers serving with the British Army are seen firing their Martini-Henry rifles from behind an earthwork at Tientsin in 1900. Like other foreign powers in China, the British recruited locals into their own units who acted as auxiliary troops. Uniforms worn by the Chinese were plain and made of khaki cotton and worn with straw sun hats. Soldiers serving with the British would have found the regular pay and relatively good conditions preferable to service with the Imperial Army.

Opposite page
Japanese officers rest outside their headquarters in Peking after the take over of the city and the relief of the besieged legations on 14 August 1900. The Japanese provided about half of the 18,000 troops involved in the second successful expedition to relieve Peking. Along with other foreign contingents the Japanese committed outrages against the innocent Chinese in revenge for the behaviour of the Boxers.

heavy attacks by 4,000 Boxers which they managed to fight off. They were, however, forced to abandon the trains which were looted as soon as they marched away. The main force was now coming under attack and could not get further downriver because of low water levels. On 22 June they were holed up inside a captured Imperial arsenal only 6 miles from Tientsin. The force was now waiting for its own relief force to come to their rescue. The 1,000-strong force of German, Japanese and Russian troops arrived on the 25th and together they marched back into Tientsin, having suffered 62 dead and 232 wounded during the poorly organized operation.

While Seymour's relief force had been trying to advance to Peking in early June the admirals in charge of the international fleet were becoming concerned about the Taku Forts. These five forts were built to guard the mouth of the Peiho River which ran upstream through Tientsin before running another 80 miles to Peking. The forts were garrisoned by Imperial Chinese troops but there was intelligence that Boxers were now stationed there alongside the regulars. If they chose, the Chinese troops in the forts could easily block the railway and river leaving both Tientsin and Peking cut off from supplies. The Allies had already seen that Imperial troops were laying mines in the river so it was now imperative that the forts be captured. The Imperial governor of Chihli province was asked to peacefully hand over the forts but, not surprisingly, he declined. Although the deadline for the handover of the forts was 17 June, Allied troops began to land near the forts on the 16th. This small assault force of soldiers and sailors was made up of 180 Russians, 250 British and 130 Germans with a reserve force of 300 Japanese and a few Italians and Austro-Hungarians. The forts were attacked in the early hours of the 17th with the support of a small fleet of Allied ships and gunboats. When the Chinese saw the approaching ships, the fort's guns opened fire on them and the Allied

troops began their assault. A direct hit on one of the fort's magazines caused a huge explosion which broke the morale of the defending Chinese troops. The forts were taken by assault by 5.00am and it was discovered that all the Imperial troops had evacuated their defensive positions. In total the assault force of 904 lost 29 killed and 69 wounded, but with the forts taken supply lines from the coast were secured.

Tientsin meanwhile was under threat by large Boxer forces who controlled the Chinese part of the city while the Allies were stationed in the international concessions. The city was vital as a base for the relief of Peking and the presence of enemy troops within the walls could not be tolerated. It was estimated that the Boxers and friendly Imperial troops in the city totalled 10,000 men with 60 modern field guns. Although no fighting between the two forces had begun the Allied troops in the city were under virtual siege. On 17 June the Imperial troops began shelling the concessions and this bombardment continued for six days. Allied troops in the city totalled 2,400 and they were joined by volunteers from the European and Japanese population including the British 'Tientsin Volunteers'. Some of the besieging Chinese troops were sent north to try and halt Seymour's returning expedition forces which relieved pressure on the defenders. When Seymour's force arrived back in Tientsin, despite Chinese efforts, the reinforced Allied forces were able to go over to the offensive on 27 June. The Allied attacks were halted by heavy Chinese artillery fire which continued for several weeks as the foreign concessions endured another siege. On 13 July, the Allies were again strong enough to go on the attack against the Chinese part of Tientsin. This time the Allies pressed home their offensive, enraged by a false rumour that the Peking legations had fallen and all foreigners had been killed. By the next day the whole of the Chinese quarter of Tientsin had fallen, with heavy casualties on both sides. The Allied troops also killed a number of civilians in revenge for the supposed events in Peking. Chinese morale was dealt a further blow when General Nieh Shi-ch'eng was killed during the fighting.

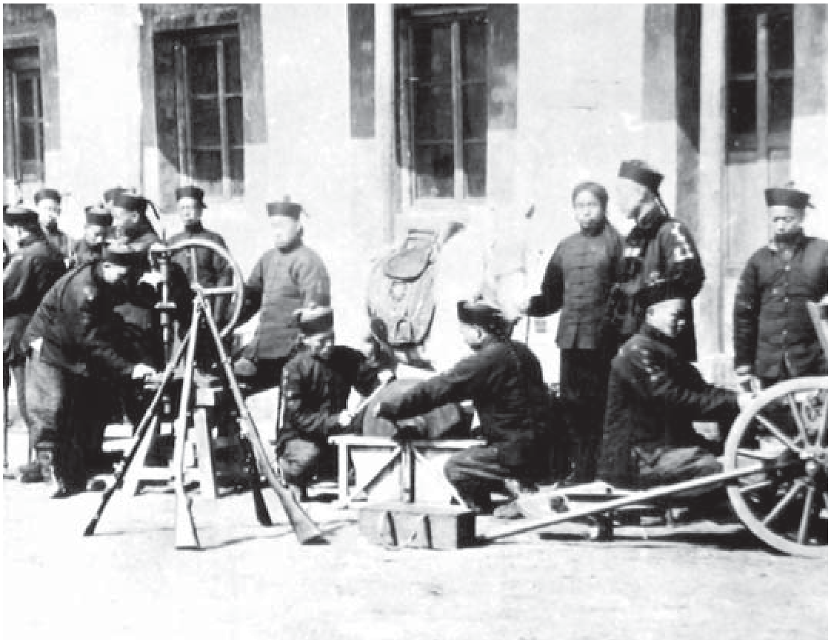
With the Allied rear areas secure following the fall of the Taku Forts and Tientsin, a new relief force could now be organized. This time it was to be led by German Field Marshal Count von Waldersee, but he had not yet arrived in China. His temporary replacement was another Englishman, General Sir Alfred Gaselee, who was to command the second relief column until Waldersee arrived. On 4 August the 17,000-strong force moved out of Tientsin. The column was made up 2,200 US troops with six guns, 2,900 British troops and 9,000 Japanese troops with 24 field guns, 2,900

Russians with two artillery batteries and 1,200 French with 12 guns. Other contingents, of Austro-Hungarians and Italians, had to return back to Tientsin because of transport difficulties. In the relief column's path were an estimated 80,000 Chinese Imperial troops who were now officially at war with the Allied powers.

Amongst the Chinese were effective units like the 1st, 2nd and 4th divisions, while the 5th Division – which had most of the Imperial Artillery – was reported to be undecided whether to fight. The Boxers all seemed to have now deserted the fighting leaving the regular army to battle the Allies. The Imperial Army proved tougher opposition than the poorly armed Boxers and the Allies suffered heavy losses as they advanced north-westwards towards Peking. In one action alone at Peitsang, where the Chinese had built strong earthwork defences, the Japanese suffered 300 dead. Following the course of the Peiho River the international relief force transported much of their supplies on junks. They were now marching in the terrible heat of a Chinese summer and the heat was as much of a problem as the Imperial Army. Temperatures reached 104°F and the cloudless skies and lack of any wind made conditions unbearable. By 12 August they had reached Tungchow, just a few miles to the east of Peking and the only decision was who should be first into the capital. The Russians tried to steal a march on the others by attacking Peking's defences on the night of the 13th. Originally the plan was for each foreign contingent to have a different gate or position to capture, but the Russians seeing another gate lightly defended attacked the wrong gate. Once the Chinese defenders were alerted they fired on the attackers and fire-fights broke out all over the city. After a few hours fighting the Chinese troops began to lose heart and the city had fallen by the evening of 14 August. Fighting continued for a while as the Forbidden City and its Imperial palaces had to be captured from some last-ditch Chinese defenders. On the 15th the empress dowager and her retinue escaped out of the city and began a trek of 700 miles to a temporary capital at Sian in Shensi province. By the start of September her representatives had arrived back in Peking to begin negotiations to end the war and allow the return of the Imperial government to Peking.

The relief of the foreign legations were greeted with the expected jubilation and a grand military parade was held on 28 August to celebrate their liberation. It was held within the Forbidden City to make clear that any further resistance to foreign demands would be met by military force. Over the next few weeks more and more Allied troops arrived in the city.

Widespread looting of much of the city's treasures took place with most military officers and other officials accepting and even partaking in this reprehensible behaviour. At the same time, a number of punitive operations were launched against the rebellious Chinese population. Throughout September and October a series of six punitive expeditions were sent out from Peking with the aim of punishing cities and towns that had supposed Boxer sympathies. Many innocent civilians were killed during the course of these operations. Government officials were punished by the order of the foreign powers with some beheaded and others banished from court. Many ordinary Boxers and any of the leaders who were caught were also beheaded by Imperial troops, usually under the supervision of foreign soldiers. The Qing dynasty was to pay a heavy price for its support of the Boxers and the foreign powers were to exploit China's weakness to the full over the coming months and years. China was to pay the Allied powers an indemnity equivalent to £67,000,000 over a period of 39 years and they had to agree to the setting up of foreign trade concessions. These mainly coastal territorial concessions totalled 25 and were divided up between the English, French, Germans, Italians, Japanese and Russians. Even the Belgians, who had not been involved in subduing the rebellion, were granted a concession. The indemnity, which was charged at 4 per cent interest a year, and the trade concessions, added to the shame of the Imperial government. Although most Chinese were angry at the foreigners in their midst they were also angry at the corrupt and ineffectual Imperial government as well. The Qing dynasty would survive for another ten years but the humiliation suffered by the Chinese in 1895 and 1900 meant that it was now on borrowed time.



Imperial Chinese soldiers perform maintenance work on their weapons in an arsenal attached to their headquarters in 1901. The men are checking the breech on their mountain gun as well as sharpening their bayonets for the Austrian Mannilicher rifles stacked in front of them. Most of the men wear Manchu hats with their uniform tunics while one man wears a turban.

THE CHINESE IMPERIAL ARMY 1900

According to some reports from foreign observers the Chinese Imperial Army at the time of the Boxer Rebellion was officially just over a million strong. However about half of this number were described by a German military observer as being 'show soldiers only employed for state and other functions'. His report also claimed that out of the remaining 500,000 or so troops, only 15,000 were armed and trained to European standards. This was a misrepresentation as a number of well-armed and fairly well-trained armies had been established in China after 1895. Amongst the modernized armies was the 'Self-Strengthening Army' under the command of Chang Chih-chung. His army was styled on German Imperial standards and was trained by a number of German military advisors. It was made up of eight battalions of infantry, two cavalry squadrons, two brigades of artillery and a company of engineers. Most other modernized Chinese armies had been incorporated into a single army in the last years before the Boxer Rebellion.

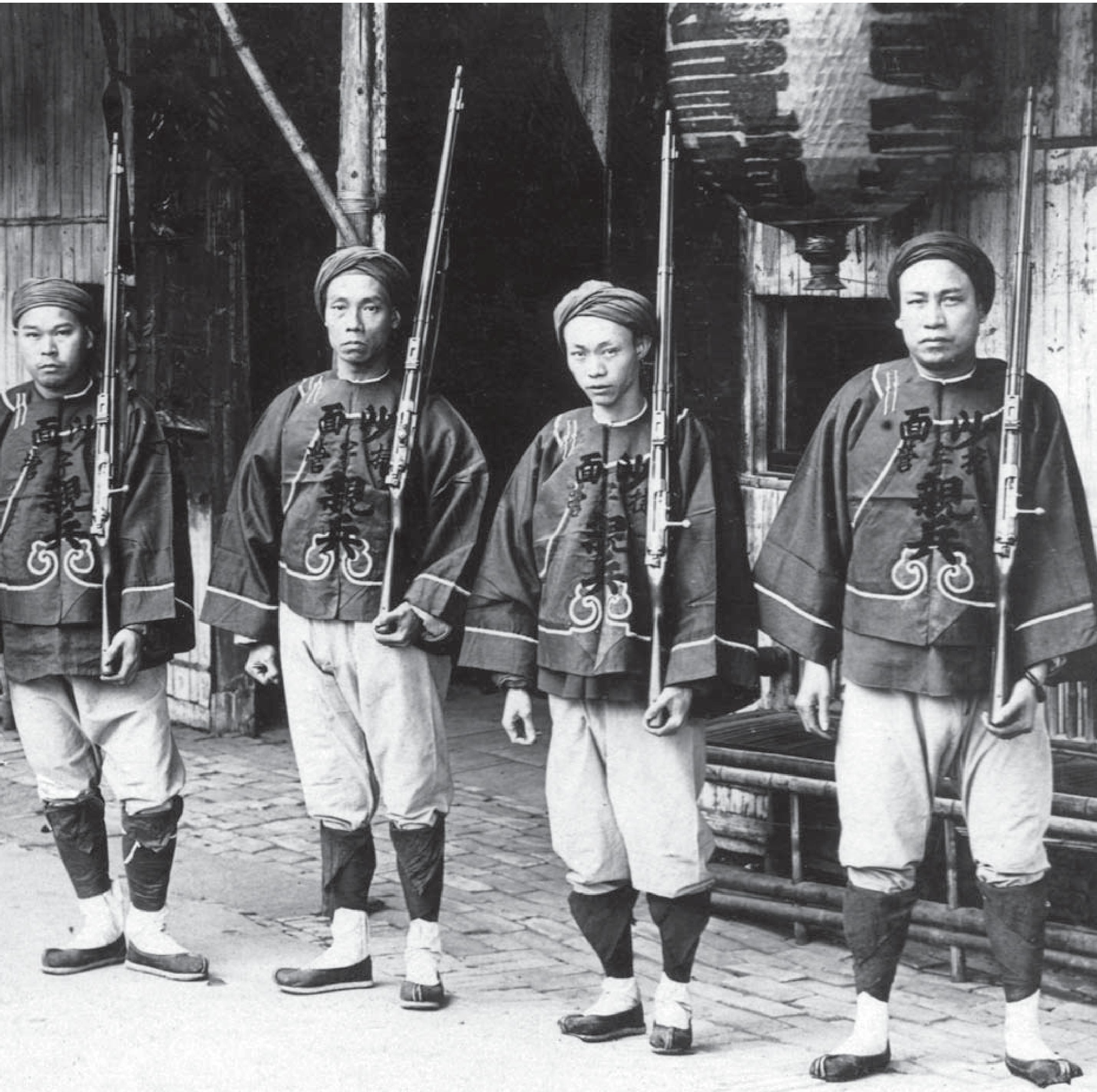
In September 1898, General Jung-Lu was given command of all the modernized armies in China and organized them into four divisions with the titles 'Front', 'Left', 'Right' and 'Rear'. The Front Division was made up of the 30 battalions of the 13,000-strong 'Tenacious Army' under the

Opposite page
This Chinese Imperial soldier, wearing a turban instead of the Manchu hat, is typical of many in the early years of the 20th century. In his right hand he carries spare bullets for his rifle and has additional rounds in the cartridge belt around his waist. The colour of the turban often varied from province to province and was a favourite item of clothing of the Braves.

In this early 20th-century tinted French postcard a Maxim machine-gun crew of the Imperial Army go through their drill under the supervision of their officer and a visiting European. The Maxim is being treated here as a piece of artillery rather than as a defensive weapon as it was in the 1914–18 war. Its mule teams are certainly loaded with enough boxes of ammunition to keep it firing for a substantial period of time.

command of General Nieh Shi-ch'eng. The 'Tenacious Army' was modelled on units of the German Imperial Army and was well armed with Mauser M1871 rifles, Maxim heavy machine guns and modern artillery. The Left Division was made up of the 'Resolute Army' with a strength of 10,000 men arranged in eight battalions of infantry, two squadrons of cavalry, two brigades of artillery and a company of engineers. Like the Tenacious Army it had Mausers, machine guns and artillery and was commanded by General Sung Ch'ing. The Right Division was made up of the 'Pacification Army' which was under the command of General Yuan Shi-kai and was organized into two wings. One wing had two infantry battalions and the other had three, and the division also had a reserve unit and four troops of cavalry. It was reported to be the best organized of all the modernized armies and in Yuan Shi-kai it had the best commander. The Rear Division was made up of 10,000 irregular Islamic Chinese troops known as Kansu Braves who were poorly trained and armed and were ill disciplined. In addition stationed to the south of Peking there was a Centre Division under the personal command of Jung-lu which largely consisted of Manchu Bannermen and had a strength of 10,000 men. There were also reported to be a further 30,000 men who were receiving training in the region of Peiyang.

After the 1895 defeat the Imperial Army had imported large numbers of new rifles, mainly from German and Britain. In 1899 alone Germany was reported to have sold China 460,000 Mauser rifles and three million cartridges. During the five-year period from 1895 to 1900 the British admitted to having exported to China 71 large guns for emplacements, 123



field guns and 207 machine guns. No amount of new weaponry could alter the mindset of some Chinese soldiers, however, and some moaned about their new rifles. One was heard to comment 'We knew how to use the old rifles, but are afraid to use shoot from these new ones'.

Opposite page
These four Imperial soldiers, photographed in Canton in 1902, belong to a guards unit of one of the early modernizing armies. They are very smartly turned out for Chinese soldiers of the period and have their unit number and their commanding officer's name on their chests. Units like this could be transformed into modern soldiers by issuing them with western-type peaked caps, jackets and trousers.

THE MODERNIZATION OF THE CHINESE IMPERIAL ARMY 1900–11

Although the Imperial Army had fought well in some of its encounters with the international relief expeditions during the Boxer Rebellion, overall its performance was mixed. This reinforced the Imperial government's need to continue its slow modernization. From 1901 until 1910 there were wholesale changes in the Imperial Army, which at least on the surface gave it the appearance of a modern military force.

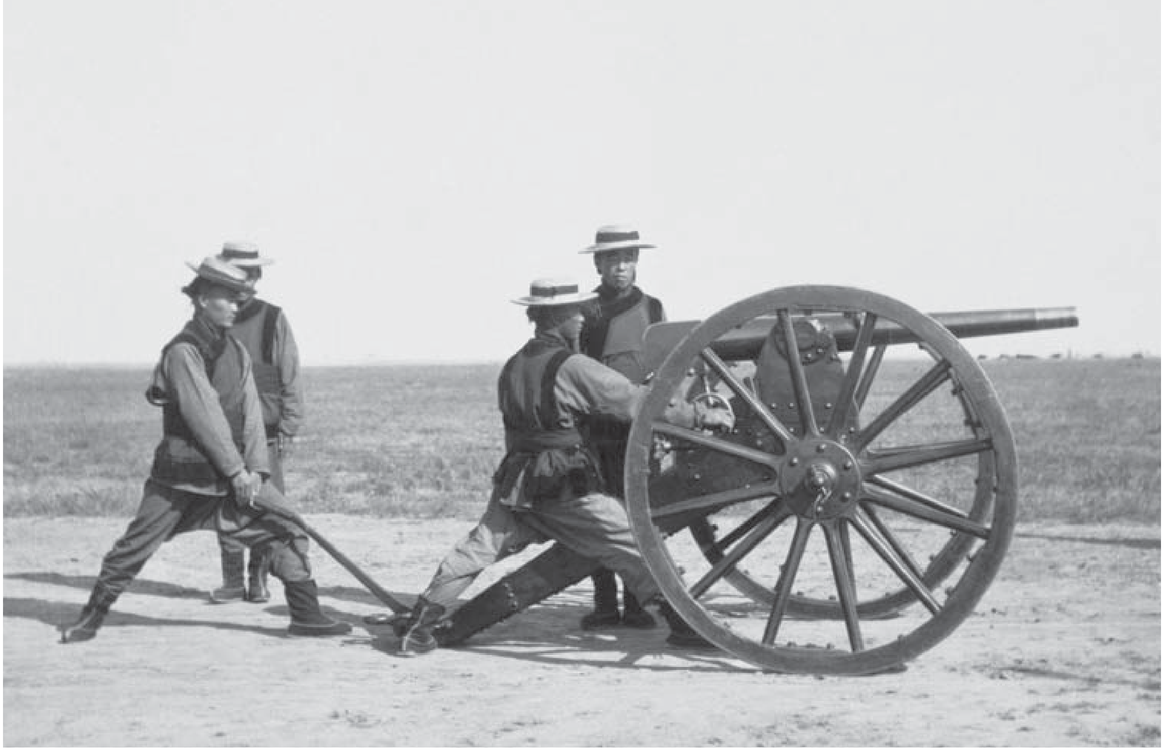
In 1901 an Imperial decree was issued ordering the re-organization and modernization of the Imperial Army. The 'New Army' that it was hoped would result from the planned modernization was to be built along the lines of the various modernized armies which had been established throughout China in the 1890s. Little was initially done apart from in Chihli province where the viceroy or governor was the prominent General Yuan Shi-kai. Yuan, of Han Chinese extraction, raised, organized and trained six divisions of modern troops between 1903 and 1906. These six divisions became known as the Beiyang Army and were the most reliable, well disciplined and trained troops in China. Yuan's plans to increase the size of the Beiyang Army to 45,000 men were, however, viewed with suspicion by the increasingly paranoid Imperial government. In 1906, in an attempt to curb the power of the Beiyang Army, the Ministry of War was reorganized and was put under the direction of a senior Manchu official with two Manchu deputies. A year later a new post of 'controller of the army' was created and again filled by a Manchu high-ranking officer. At the same time several senior Han Chinese were sent to Peking to serve in non-military roles. These included two of the most powerful Chinese military commanders at the time, Yuan Shi-kai himself, who was given an honoury position as a grand councilor in Peking, and Chang Chih-tung. The Imperial government's motives for these moves were clearly to sideline potential threats to the establishment like. They also sought to establish the authority of the minority Manchus over the majority Han Chinese in the army. When Yuan Shi-kai was sent to Peking

Opposite page
Two soldiers of a modernized Chinese army under the command of General Ma stand guard outside their barracks in north-western China. Their buttoned-up tunics and headgear provide a uniform of sorts and are worn with Mongolian soft boots. They are armed with Japanese Murata rifles dating from the 1880s and have cartridge boxes for them on their belts.

he was also stripped of four of his divisions which were transferred to the Ministry of War. This left Yuan with the 2nd and 4th divisions which he continued to try and improve and expand where possible.

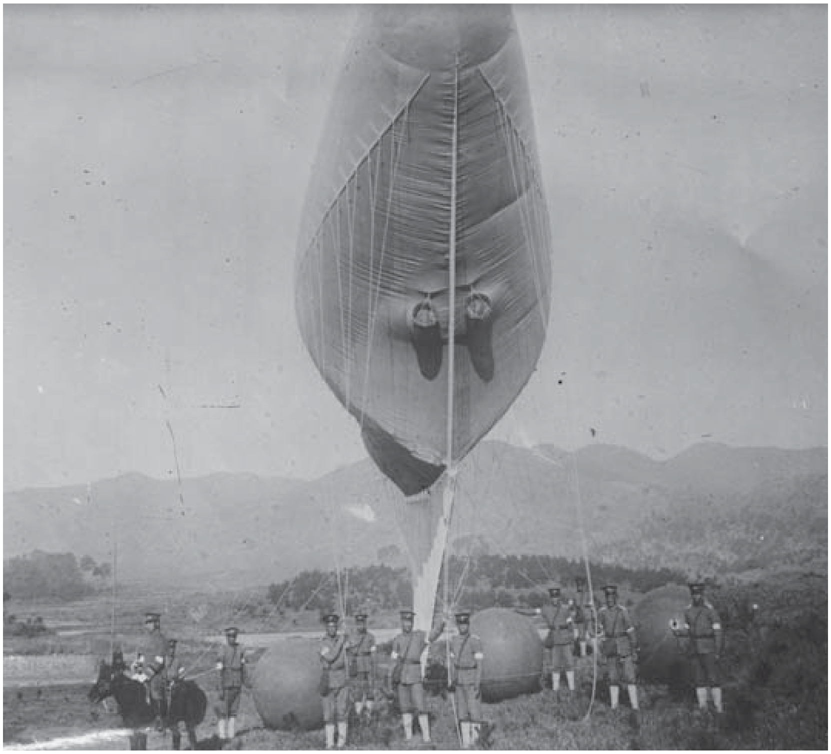
The original plan for the Imperial Army had called for 36 modernized divisions to be formed within ten years. In 1907 this plan was accelerated with the intention of having the divisions in place by 1912. This plan was intended to create a modern well-organized Imperial Army of 450,000 men. The modernization plan also included the formation of a modern Imperial Guard Corps which was formed on 3 December 1908. It was intended to reach a strength of 30,000 men and was to be responsible for the protection of the Forbidden City and of the emperor. By 1909 it had reached a strength of one infantry regiment and one squadron of cavalry, recruited exclusively from the Manchu population. In 1910 Han Chinese were also allowed into the Imperial Guard although by the time of the 1911 Revolution it and the 1st Division of the Army were still filled with Manchu soldiers. By 1909 the regular army had reached a total of nine divisions and the following year there were 12 in place.

In 1910, in a final attempt to curb Yuan Shi-kai's power he was stripped of his last two divisions and was forced into retirement. According to the Imperial government Yuan was ill and needed time away from his military service. Of course his loyal officers did not believe this, and were on the verge of rebellion. Yuan himself had little choice but to go along with the farce while he waited for an opportunity to return. This left the new war minister, Yin-Ch'ang, a Manchu, in charge of all six divisions of the Beiyang Army and the Imperial Guard Corps. General Yin-Ch'ang soon proved to be an energetic reformer. He was a graduate of the college system in Peking who had then studied at German military schools. He was a great admirer of the German Army and its efficiency and of the weaponry produced by the German war industries. He tried to instil a new discipline and pride in the Chinese Army and insisted that the number of foreign advisors be reduced. He also insisted that any foreign military advisors who remained in China must be subordinate to the Chinese officers they served beside. In an effort to control the provincial commanders' influence over their troops he ruled that the transfer of senior officers should be put solely in the hands of his ministry. As part of his reorganization of the army he stationed divisions of the Beiyang Army in strategic locations throughout China alongside the less reliable units of the Eight Banners. His plan to slowly disband the old-fashioned sections of the Imperial Army such as the Bannermen and to modernize the rest of the army continued.



The artillery crew of one of the recently imported field guns go through drill on the parade ground in 1902. These men belong to one of the better-organized Chinese armies and have well-kept uniforms including straw hats. In the late 1800s and early 1900s the Chinese began to import large numbers of artillery pieces for their army. (Corbis)

New recruits in the modernized Imperial Army had to be between 20 and 25 years of age and a minimum of 5ft 6in in height. The shorter stature of southern men was taken into account by allowing men of 5ft 4in to join the ranks. They were to serve for three years in the regular army before passing into the reserve for a further three years. During their time in the reserve they were to receive one month of drill per year. After three years they would enter the 2nd reserve and receive one month of drill over a two-year period. An army division was to be composed of two infantry brigades, one cavalry regiment and one artillery regiment. In addition a division would have an engineers' battalion, a transport battalion and a military band. Each brigade consisted of two regiments, each of which contained three battalions with each battalion having four companies. A company was divided in three platoons which was then divided into sections of varying size. Mixed brigades were made up of two infantry regiments with one artillery and one cavalry battalion and an engineer and transport company. Infantry divisions were to have an official strength of 12,500 men while brigades had 3,024 men and a regiment 60 officers and 1,512 men. Battalions were 504 strong;

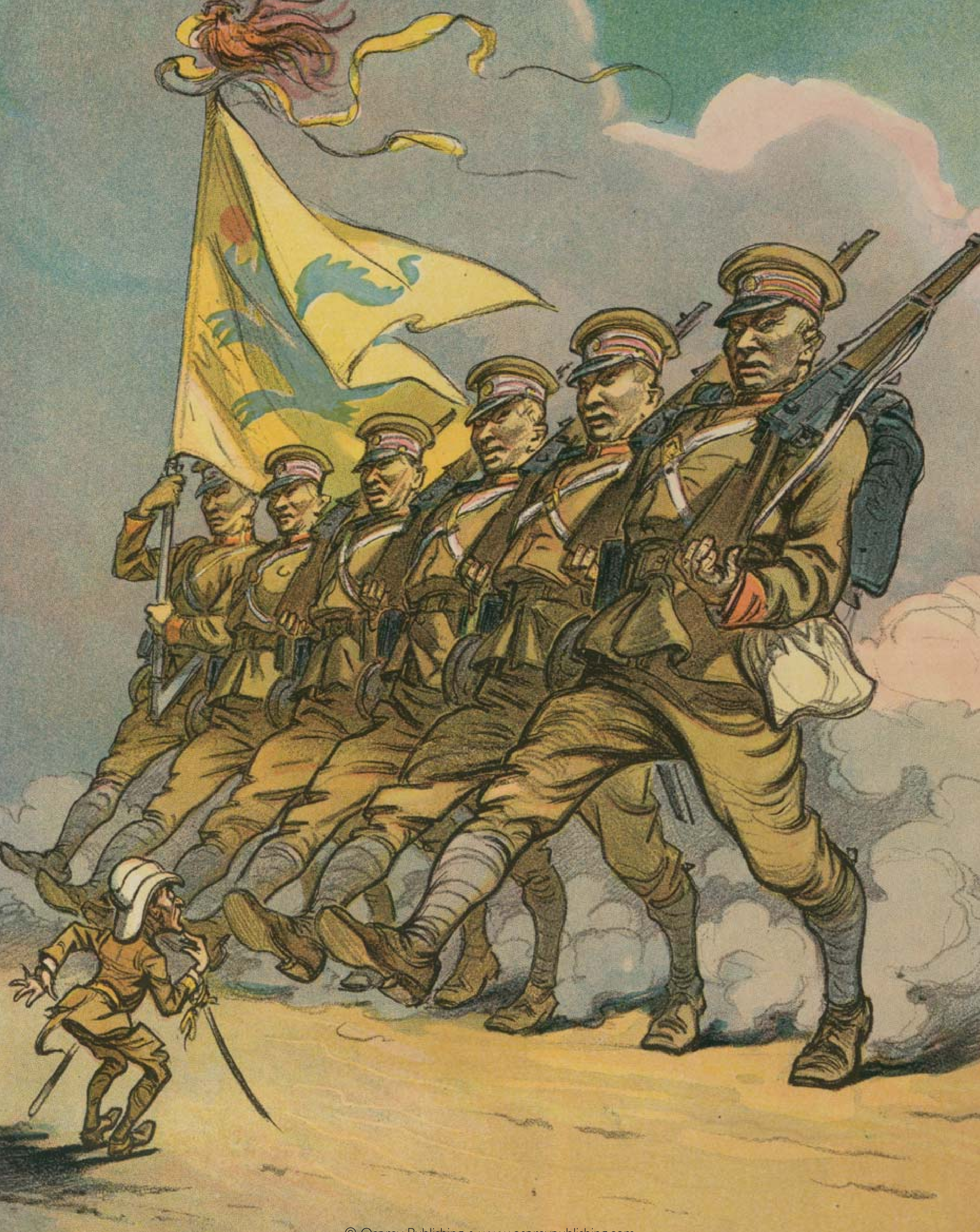


This observation balloon detachment are photographed during one of the pre-1911 Imperial Army manoeuvres. As part of their modernization programme the Chinese looked into buying aircraft to set up an aviation branch of the Imperial Army. When the costs involved were explained to them by the French manufacturer Blériot they cancelled their plans.

companies had 168 men; and platoons had 42 soldiers. Cavalry regiments were to have 48 officers and 816 troopers and an artillery regiment contained three battalions of three batteries each with each battery having a complement of four officers, 137 men and six guns. A 1905 Imperial decree had announced the foundation of an Imperial officer-training college and for the establishment of several officer cadet schools. Other more practical changes included the replacement of the practice of kow-towing to a superior officer with a European-style salute. It was also agreed that in future officers could cut off their queues and have a more westernized haircut but this did not meet with the Qing court’s approval.

All these changes put pressure on the Imperial finances and by 1910 the military budget was eight times what it had been in 1905. By 1911 it was estimated that the military was going to account for about a third of the total Chinese annual budget.

Much of the military funds were spent on new weaponry for the Imperial Army as they made large-scale purchases of small arms and artillery from Europe. In 1907 they ordered 2,000,000 German rifles in



an effort to standardize the weapons in the Imperial Army. This order was followed in 1910 by an order for up to 200 75mm Krupp lightweight mountain guns. These would become the mainstay of the artillery up until 1928.

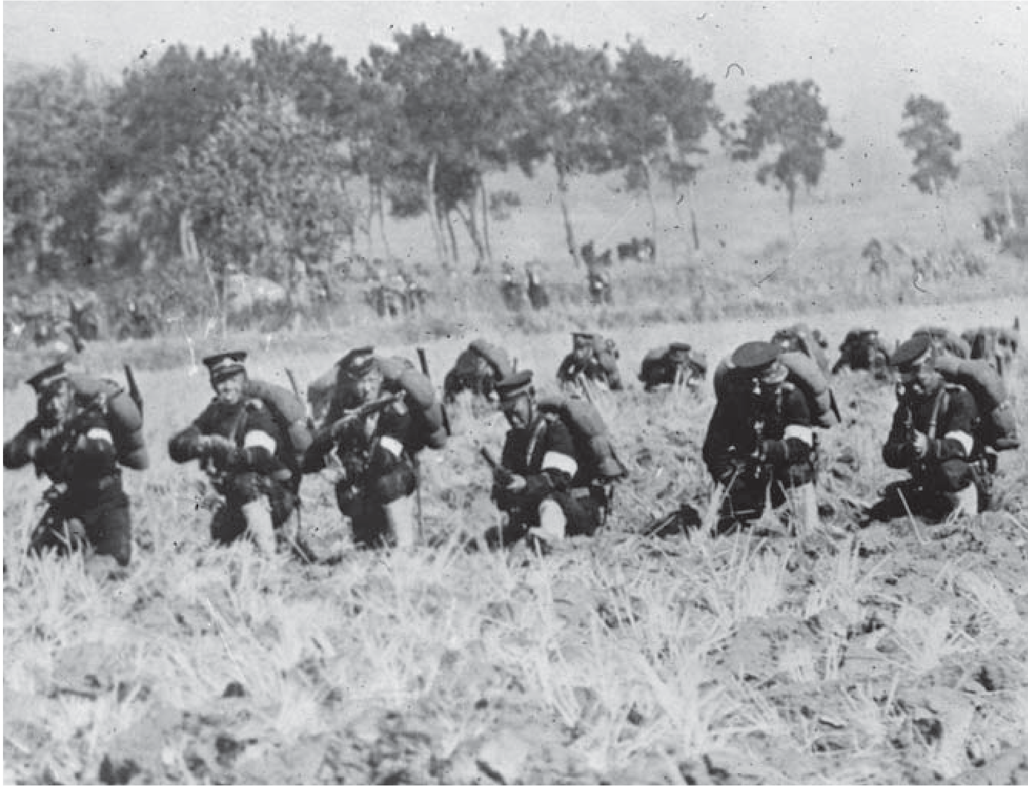
In 1910 and 1911 the modernized Imperial Army had several military successes which proved the worth of the previous five years of modernization. Under the leadership of several rebellious princes, Tibet – which was still nominally a province of China – had been trying to break its ties with Peking. A well-organized and -planned invasion of eastern Tibet was undertaken and soon re-established direct Chinese control over the region. Chinese troops then went on to occupy the Tibetan capital Lhasa which led to the flight of the spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, to India. Further Chinese advances took their troops to the borders with the British-dominated kingdoms of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. These successful military campaigns gave back the Imperial government a little pride after the years of humiliation. They had also given new impetus to the further modernization of the Imperial Army, which would, however, shortly face challenges from within the borders of China herself.

Opposite page
A satirical cartoon from an American magazine of 1910 illustrates the threat that a modernized Chinese army might pose to the European powers and their colonies in the Far East. The tiny colonial figure reels in shock as the well-armed and smartly uniformed Imperial Army marches towards him. In reality the Chinese Army had enough problems controlling its own population without encroaching on the empires of the great powers.

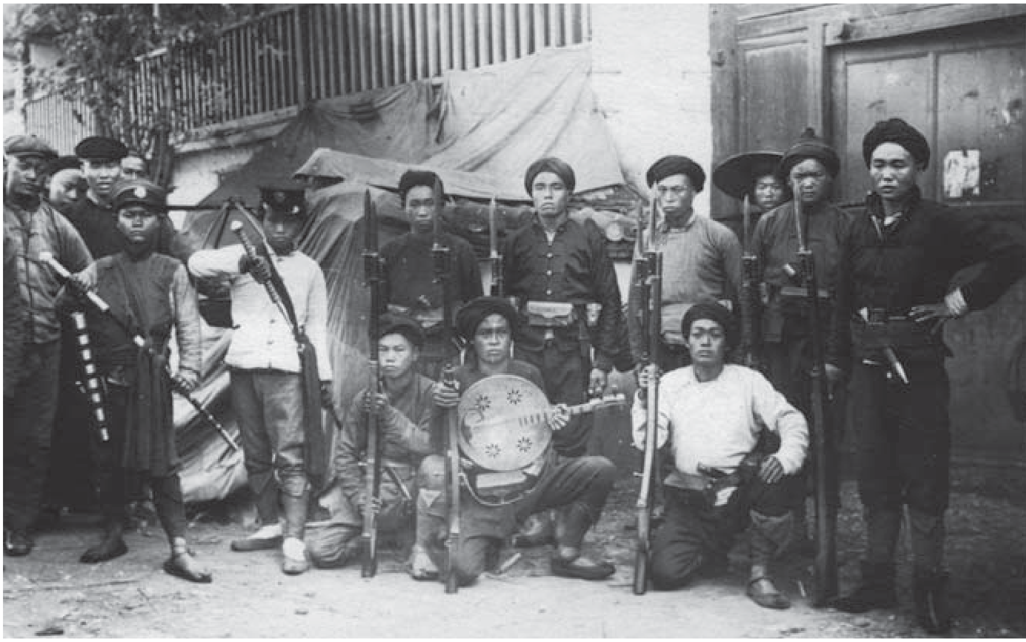
ANTI-QING REVOLTS 1900–10

The Chinese defeats against Japan in 1895 and its humiliation by the Allied Powers in 1900 stirred up anti-Qing feelings. In 1905 in Japan a meeting of exiled revolutionary groups led by Doctor Sun Yat-sen formed the Tongmenghui or Chinese Revolutionary Alliance. This group combined many of the existing underground anti-Qing organizations into one political body. The 39-year-old Sun Yat-sen, who had been born in Kwangtung province, had campaigned for many years usually from exile for the overthrow of the Imperial system.

An abortive Kwangtung Rising against the Qing in 1895 organized by Sun had failed miserably but it had given him an elevated status amongst China's many discontented political thinkers. He was now to become the figurehead for other revolutionaries operating in China and led to him encouraging other groups opposed to the way that the country was being governed. These included the 'Railway Protection Societies' which campaigned for an end to the policy of allowing foreign companies to build railways in China in return for loans to the government. Other



During manoeuvres of the Imperial Army between 1905 and 1911 the newly modernized units were trained in modern battle tactics. This attack across open fields against dug-in opposition with machine guns would have soon resulted in horrendous casualties. The Chinese can hardly be blamed for practising these outmoded tactics when the armies of Europe were to employ them a few years later in the first years of the 1914–18 war.

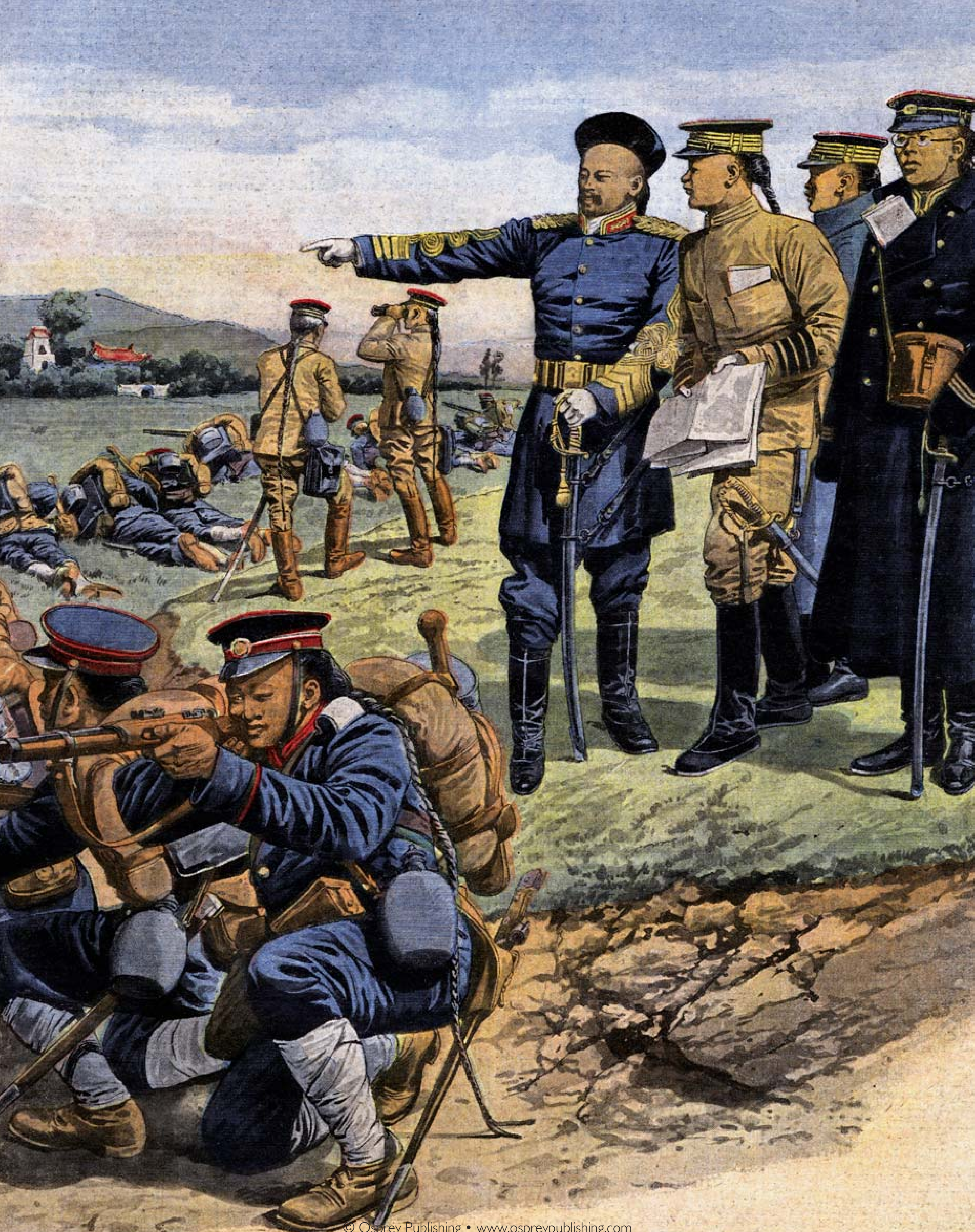


A unit of militia from the south-western province of Yunnan pose outside their local headquarters in 1911 in the days before the Revolution. Soldiers like this belonged to the un-modernized armies which tended to support the Imperial regime. Although they are mostly armed with modern rifles their training would have been very basic. There was little ammunition available for target practice and their training was often confined to basic drill.

Imperial Navy sailors wearing recently introduced modern European-style uniforms on parade just before the Revolution. After the destruction of the navy during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, it had been rebuilt with new ships ordered from most of the world's shipbuilding nations. The Chinese Navy was never more than a coastal patrol force and few of its ships ventured beyond their territorial waters.

groups included the 'Village Leagues' which were made up of former Boxers and other revolutionaries as well as the 'Political Culture Association' which campaigned for a democratic system for China. Finally there were a number of secret societies like the 'Society of Elder Brothers' which had covertly worked against the Imperial government for centuries. These groups began a series of revolts against the Imperial government. In 1907 there were several revolts in Hunan province which were caused by poor harvests and high taxation. These were followed over the next two years by Tongmenghui-supported revolts in Kwangsi, Yunnan and Kwangtung provinces.

The death of the Empress Dowager Ts'u-hsi in 1908 and the accession to the Imperial throne of three-year-old Pu Yi encouraged the rebels. Without the powerful personality of the empress dowager who had effectively ruled China since 1862 the Qing dynasty was even more vulnerable to revolution. Although the continuing revolts were localized and could be relatively easily put down they did at least bring concessions from the Imperial government. A promise in 1909 for the formation of provincial assembles was, however, postponed the following year which led to another revolt in Canton in February 1910. Soon these relatively small-scale revolts would be overtaken by a full-scale revolution which not only signalled the death knell for the Qing dynasty but heralded years of bloodshed for all the peoples of China.



CHAPTER 2
REVOLUTION
1911–20

Three years after the death of the powerful Empress Dowager Ts'u-hsi, Imperial China was in its final decline. By 1911 the Chinese people were growing tired of empty promises of reform by the Qing dynasty. Even the slightest confrontation between the Imperial authorities and the population was likely to trigger a rebellion. An uprising in the southern province of Kwangtung in April 1911 was brutally put down by the Imperial Army. This repression of the revolutionaries did not stop their activities however, and throughout 1911 the pressure began to build on the Imperial authorities. The Imperial Army and the government's secret service clamped down on any rebellious actions no matter how small.

Opposite page
This illustration from a French magazine of the pre-1911 period shows the look of the newly modernized Chinese Imperial Army. The soldiers and officers featured have a mixture of old and new uniforms with the senior officer wearing the old-style Manchu hat. Other younger officers wear the khaki summer uniform but still have their queues hanging down at the back while the privates in the foreground wear the dark-blue winter uniform. (Mary Evans Picture Library)

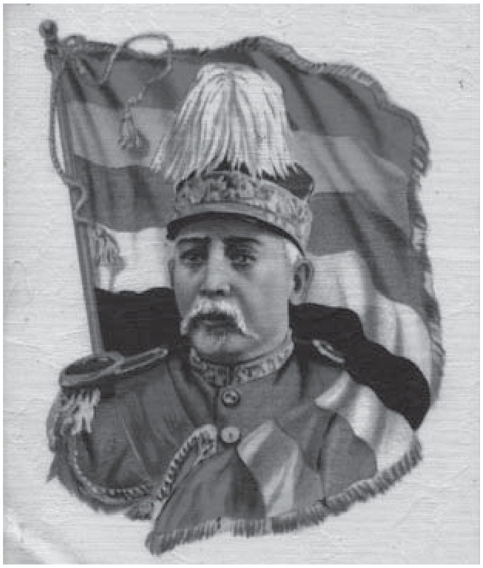
The spark that finally ignited the revolution came from a demonstration which took place in September 1911. This demonstration was against the building of the Szechwan–Hankow Railway by a foreign company. There had been a great deal of unrest caused by the Imperial government's agreements to allow foreign companies to build and then run railways. This granting of concessions to foreign railway companies was seen as another exploitation of China. Many Imperial soldiers had secretly joined the Railway Protection Society, which now tried to stop the building of this latest railway. Imperial troops opened fire on the demonstrators and in response armed members of the Railway Protection Society along with sympathetic soldiers took temporary control of the city of Hankow.

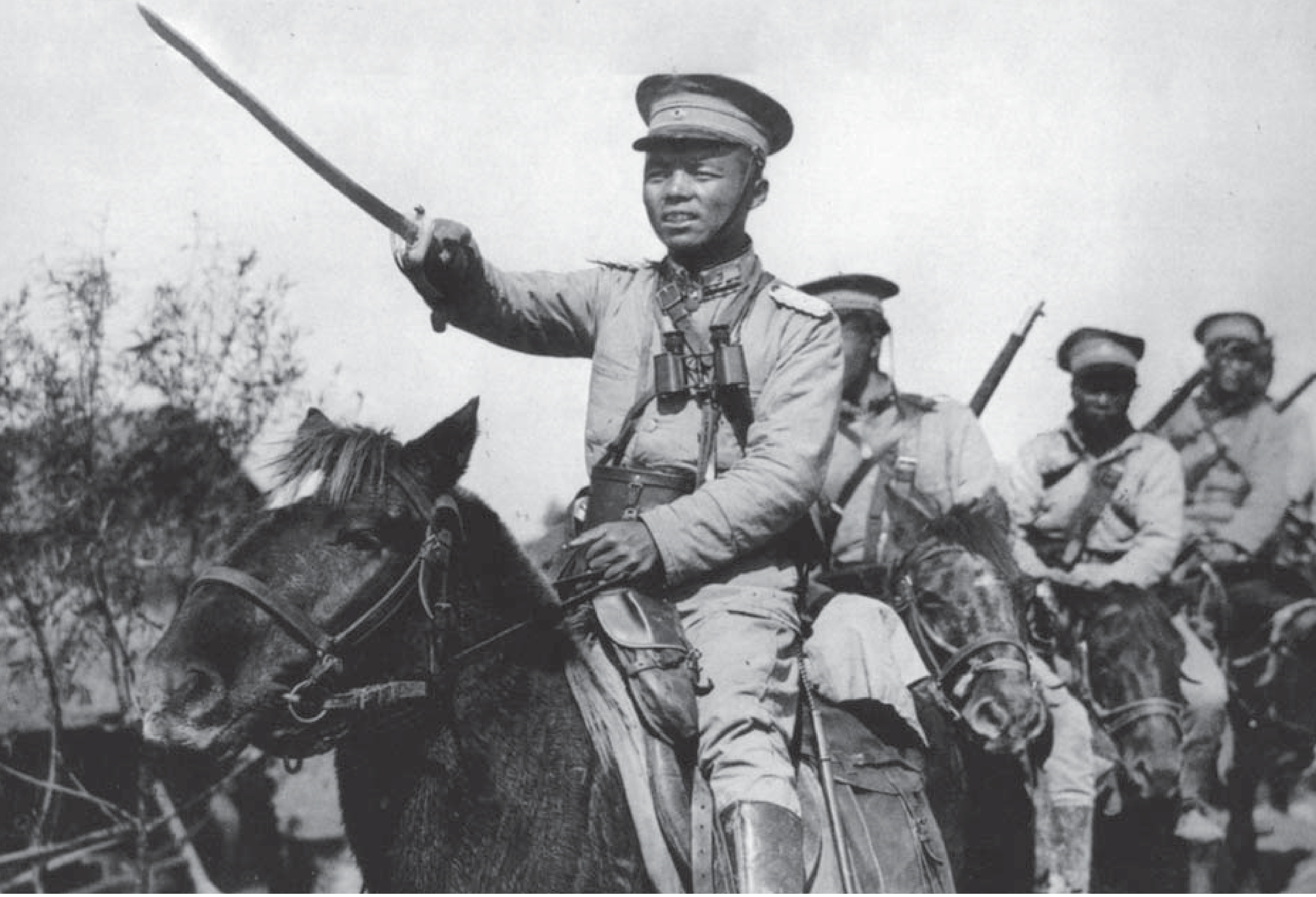
THE 1911 REVOLUTION

On 9 October, an accidental explosion in the headquarters of a group of Revolutionaries in Wuhan tri-city alerted the Imperial authorities to the threat of a full-scale revolution. Fearing arrest, the conspirators, including many soldiers of the city's garrison, had to bring forward their plans for their revolt. In the ensuing chaos Imperial soldiers of the Beiyang Army refused to open fire on the rebels and instead joined them. With well-armed regular troops behind them the Revolutionaries could now attack the nearby city of Wuchang which fell on the 11th and the same day the city of Hanyang also fell. The revolution now spread with the city of Hankow falling on the following day and rebellions breaking out in the provinces of Kiangsi, Hunan, Shansi and Hupei.

In Peking the Imperial government's response to the revolution was to send an army south to re-take the three rebel-held cities of Hankow, Wuchang and Hanyang. Put in command of the Imperial Army was General Yin-Ch'ang, an uninspired decision as Yin-Ch'ang was entirely unsuited to the role. He had been a good administrator during the pre-1911 reforms but was not an effective field commander. While on a visit to Germany a short time before the outbreak of the Revolution he had expressed his doubts about the performance of the Imperial Army in any civil war. Not surprisingly his soldiers did not show any particular desire to fight the Revolutionaries and in fact

This souvenir silk given away in European cigarettes features the president of China, Yuan Shi-kai. Yuan had been a prominent Imperial commander who fought against the 1911 Revolution then negotiated a peace with the rebels and became the first President of the Republic in April 1912. In 1915 he decided, on the advice of his councillors, to make himself the 'new' emperor of China. This caused widespread opposition and led to the declaration of independence by 17 provinces. He decided to abdicate after a few months on the throne and resumed the presidency until his death in 1916.





An Imperial Army general leads a patrol of cavalry during fighting for the city of Hankow during the 1911 Revolution. The well-armed and professional Imperial Army usually defeated the poorly-armed and untrained Revolutionaries in most encounters during the 1911 fighting. With popular support behind the Revolutionaries some Imperial officers like Yuan Shi-kai knew that a republican solution was preferable to a continuing war.

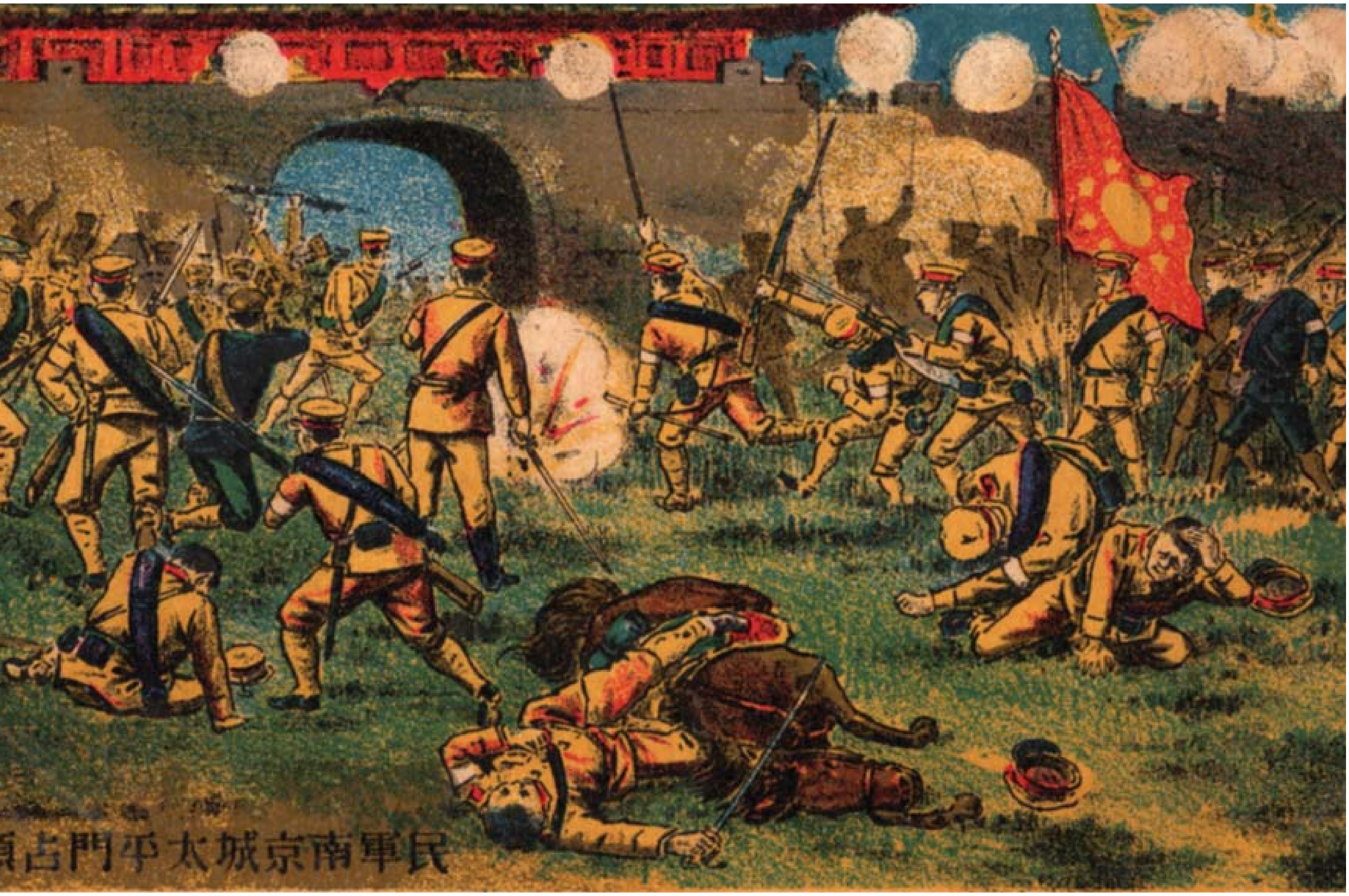
many were sympathetic towards them. Many of the Imperial Army commanders were, however, confident of victory and arrogantly dismissed the rebels as 'An Army of Hooligans'. Yin's 1st Imperial Army was made up of the 4th Division and a mixed brigade each from the 2nd and 6th divisions as well as his own personal troops from the 1st Division. General Yin moved his troops by rail to the vicinity of the city of Hankow and attacked the Revolutionary army under the command of General Huang Hsing on 27 October. His troops were supported by the heavy guns of the Imperial Artillery and the guns of several ships of the navy. Some of the shells fired by the artillery contained melinite which set parts of the city ablaze. After the bombardment concluded the Imperialist troops advanced in column across the open ground in front of the city. If the troops defending the city had been equipped with machine guns the attack would have broken down instead the Imperial Army quickly took the revolutionary defences. They continued into Hankow with the demoralized rebels retreating before them. It took a few days for the Imperial troops to clear the city and most Revolutionary soldiers were able to withdraw safely.

When they entered Hankow on 2 November the Imperial troops ran amok, burning down large parts of the city. They were careful, however, to make sure that the foreign concessions were spared. A reported 28,000 Revolutionary soldiers and civilians were killed during the fall of Hankow. Although the Imperial Army had re-taken the city they were now isolated from their command in Peking when rebellious Shansi troops cut communications between the two cities.

While Hankow was being fought over, the rebel-held city of Hanyang was also coming under attack by the Imperial 1st Army under the command of General Feng Kuo-chang. Feng had taken command at Hanyang on 30 October and had immediately begun planning to retake the city. The Imperial attack was launched on the city on 20 November and by the 22nd they had captured the heights above the city. Revolutionary troops from rebel-held Wuchang were sent to reinforce the defenders but many were killed before they reached the city. Another attempt to relieve the city involved a plan to outflank the Imperial troops with another force sent from Revolutionary headquarters in Wuchang. This time the plan failed when the force's commander was intoxicated. To complicate matters the Revolutionary army included troops from Hupei and Hunan whose provincial rivalry meant they had little trust in each other. When the encirclement plan collapsed the Hunan troops blamed the Hupei troops for failing to go into action and the former left and went home to their province. Despite the best efforts of the Revolutionaries in Wuchang to aid their comrades, the city fell on 27 November.

The fall of the city was covered in the press, with lurid reports of thousands of civilian deaths during the Imperialist take-over. In total it was estimated that the defenders and the civilian population suffered 3,300 deaths. The loss to the rebels of the huge Hanyang munitions factory was another blow to the Revolutionary army, which depended on its output to arm its troops.

Although the Revolutionaries had now lost both Hankow and Hanyang to the Imperialists they still controlled Wuchang. In December their failing cause was to be boosted somewhat by the taking of the major city of Nanking. The Imperialist garrison of Nanking was made up largely of the old-style troops who had some loyalty to the emperor. These 14 battalions of soldiers did not trust the more westernized troops who constituted the rest of the garrison. Because of this distrust the loyalist troops insisted that the westernized units be disarmed by their commanders with their ammunition and the bolts on their rifles taken away. Although



A revolutionary postcard issued shortly after the 1911 Revolution illustrates the storming of Nanking in December. The new Wuchang Army flag is carried by the Revolutionaries while yellow Imperial flags still fly from the walls of the city.

not imprisoned the soldiers of the modern units feared for their lives, especially once an attack was launched by the Revolutionary army. The Revolutionary forces preparing to attack the city were joined by deserters from the Imperial 34th Regiment of the 9th Division. A first assault failed when a mutiny by the 'disloyal' troops of the garrison failed to join the Revolutionaries as promised – they were hardly in a position to fight the loyal defenders when they had been disarmed by their erstwhile comrades. The next attack came on 28 November and this time it was better planned and preceded by an artillery bombardment by the Revolutionaries. During the course of the brutal four-day battle the 12,000 Imperialist troops massacred a large number of civilians who they suspected of being pro-Revolutionary. Casualties on both sides were heavy. The attackers were largely made up of volunteer soldiers who had received little training. These volunteer units included a 12-strong female unit which was

commanded by the widow of a Revolutionary soldier. When the Imperialist garrison finally surrendered on 2 December they knew that their earlier behaviour ensured that they could expect little mercy. Thousands of the garrison were reported to have been killed when the city fell and any Manchu citizens were also slaughtered by the Revolutionaries. Some 2,000 of the most fanatical Imperialist troops had dug themselves into the citadel, where they fought to the last man.

Both the Revolutionary and Imperial armies were now showing signs of weakness and a peaceful solution to the conflict seemed preferable. The Revolutionary troops were often poorly led and poorly trained but made up for this with their bravery and enthusiasm. The leadership in both armies was not always the best and many officers simply did not want to fight for either the Revolution or the Qing dynasty. For instance, General Li Yuan-hung, the Revolutionary army commander in chief, had been reluctant to take up his role. Li, who had previously been in command of the Imperial Army in Hupei province, was the only senior officer available to the Revolutionaries. According to reports of the time, he was dragged from underneath his bed and ordered to take command by rebel officers. The Imperial Army was running short of funds even in the early days of the Revolution and paymasters often did not have the money to pay the men in their units. Mutinies were breaking out throughout the army and although many troops stayed loyal to their commanders others began to desert and join the rebels. Foreign observers who commented on the performance of the Imperial troops during the 1911 fighting said that the troops were remarkably brave. They also praised the well-organized field telephone and telegraph service, which operated well during the war. Although the artillery was also praised, they had little opposition from the few mountain guns in the Revolutionary army. These were crewed by so-called 'dare-to-die' units which tried vainly to compete with the Imperial artillery with its medium and heavy field guns.

In general the Imperial Army performed well during the Revolution but was undermined by the poor leadership of many of its officers. Although the Revolutionary forces had been growing during the fighting they were still largely an untrained levy which would not do well against determined Imperial troops. By the end of 1911 the Revolutionary forces in Nanking had reached 55,000 men and the Wuchang Army had reached a strength of 45,000 men. The Wuchang Army had been reinforced by troops from the provinces of Anhwei, Kiangsi, Hunan and Kwangsi. Other Revolutionary troops came from the provinces of Kiangsu,

Opposite page top
Ragged civilian volunteers for the Revolutionary army in 1911 are seen with their newly acquired rifles. By the end of the Revolution in early 1912 it was estimated that over 800,000 soldiers and civilians had volunteered for the various rebel armies. As soon as the Revolution was over most of these men returned to their previous employment. Those without a job resisted their units being disbanded as they had no other way of earning a living.

Opposite bottom
Student revolutionaries are posing with older comrades in the early days of the 1911 Revolution. The soldiers on the left of the picture are wearing their student black uniforms and are armed with ex-Imperial Army rifles. On the right of the photograph stand two bomb-throwers, who, according to the caption, have been issued with eight grenades each. Spare grenades are carried in the white canvas holdalls that the men wear over their shoulders. (Corbis)

An Imperial Army 75mm field-gun battery bombards Revolutionary positions during the battle for the city of Hankow. The Imperial Army had an overwhelming superiority in artillery over the Revolutionary army which only had a few light mountain guns.

Chekiang, Fukien and Canton and these were a mixture of untrained volunteers and regular army deserters.

While the fighting for the cities of Hankow and Hanyang had been in progress, moves were already being made to settle the conflict. The man who was to lead the negotiations between the Revolutionaries and the Imperial government was Yuan Shi-kai. Yuan was one of the most accomplished of the Imperial Army commanders, having joined the army in 1896 after working in the civil service. He rose quickly through the ranks and by 1898 he was in command of the Tientsin Division of the modernized Beiyang Army. With his 7,000 loyal troops and in charge of a military training school he established himself as a potential leader of the Imperial Army. During the Boxer Rebellion he had been one of the most fierce suppressors of the rebels and had gained some admirers in the West. From 1900 to 1907 he held various posts including the governorship of Chihli province but he, like other powerful provincial military officers, was now seen as a threat to the Manchu dynasty. He was given an honorary position in Peking as grand councillor while at the same time his military force was reduced in size. In 1910 the regents of the young emperor, Pu Yi, forced Yuan into retirement. When threatened by the Revolution in 1911, Yuan was suddenly re-called from his enforced retirement. He was now given the chance to redeem himself and serve the Imperial government in its hour of need. After the way that the Qing court had treated Yuan in 1910, choosing him as protector for their failing dynasty was a surprising choice. The Imperial government's motives were mixed but by appointing him to command their armies it was hoped that he would be less likely to join the Revolution. On 14 October Yuan was appointed military governor of Hupei and Hunan and was given the task of subduing the Revolution. Besides Yuan's control of the Beiyang Army he also had the support of British and US diplomats who saw him as the 'saviour' of China. Before going to take up his command he demanded several conditions, including lenient treatment of the Revolutionaries. This demand was issued in order to put him on good terms with the Revolutionary leadership when he needed to negotiate with them. Yuan knew that the Imperial government was now depending on him and his troops to put down the Revolution. At the same the Revolutionaries were hoping that he could negotiate a peaceful end to Imperial rule. In a subterfuge typical of Yuan he sent an army under General Feng Kuo-chang to attack rebel-held Hankow and at the same time sent two emissaries to the rebel headquarters to initiate peace negotiations. Under the leadership of General Li Yuan-hung, the Revolutionary army had not been performing well with discord in its ranks. However, by November the tide had turned again in favour of the Revolutionaries and Yuan decided that an accommodation with their political and military leaders was urgently required. With so many provinces joining the Revolution, it was only a matter of time before the Imperial government in Peking fell. Yuan knew that as long as he had the loyalty of his own troops he could defeat the rebels militarily, but he also knew that politically the Imperial government was doomed. A meeting between the representatives of various provinces was held on 30 November in the British concession in Hankow. Some opined that the Imperial government was ruling in name only and the real power was in the hands of Yuan Shi-kai. To avoid any more unnecessary fighting they decided to ask Yuan to become provisional president. Under

中華大國民

Previous page
Girl cadets of the Republican army pose outside their headquarters in 1912 wearing newly issued uniforms. Any pretensions that the new Republic would allow women to fully participate in the Chinese Army would be short lived. Behind the girls hangs the Wuchang Revolutionary flag of 1911 with the black star on red background and an unidentified unit flag with Chinese characters written across it.

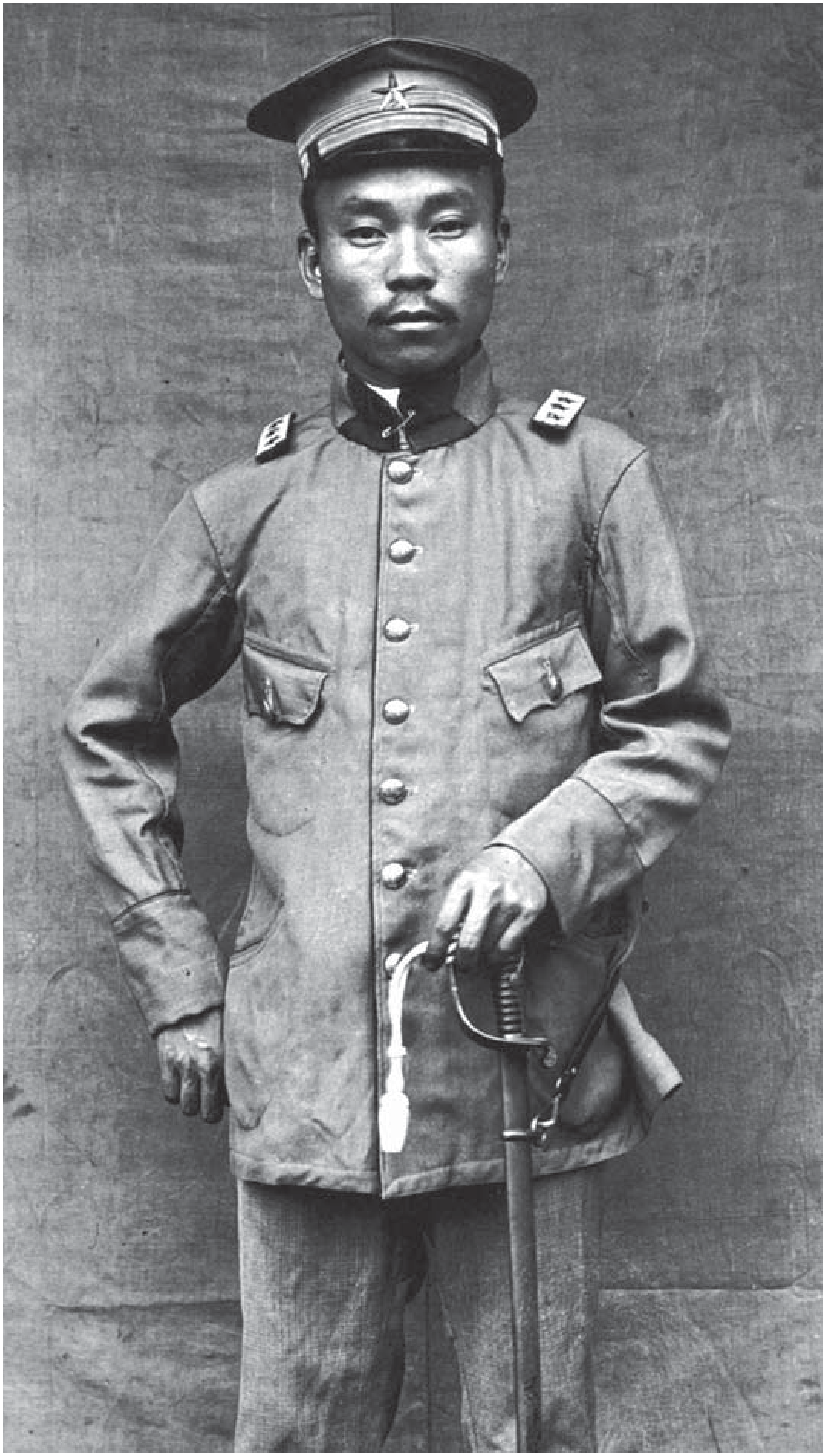
the terms of the agreement Yuan would tell the Qing court that their rule was over and that their child emperor should abdicate. Yuan Shi-kai was now the most dominant military and political figure in China and for the next ten weeks he played the power broker. He would subtly threaten the Imperial court, telling them that he might be unable to stop the advance of the Revolutionary army. At the same time he could, if necessary, threaten the Revolutionaries with the power of the Beiyang Army which was once again under his command. While Yuan was trying to obtain the most advantage he could from the demise of the Qing dynasty other pressures were coming to bear on the situation.

On 16 January 1912, the Northern Punitive Army, which was made up of soldiers from Shanghai and China's southern provinces, landed in Shantung province. They began preparations for an attack on Peking which was garrisoned by 33,400 Imperial troops. Of this garrison 19,000 were Chinese provincial troops who could probably not be relied on, and 14,000 Manchu troops who would remain loyal to the emperor. On 28 January the Qing dynasty were dealt a further blow when 44 generals, including most of the commanders of the Beiyang Army, demanded the formation of a Republican government. The Imperial representatives were now offered a compromise which could potentially resolve the situation. Under the terms offered by the new Republic which had been in existence since December, the six-year-old emperor would be allowed to remain in the Forbidden City. Within the confines of the Imperial Palace he would have the same rights as he had previously held, but outside he would be treated as an honoured but private citizen. With few options the emperor's regents reluctantly agreed to the offer and Pu Yi abdicated on 12 February 1912.

THE NEW REPUBLIC

However, the surprise election of the left-wing politician Sun Yat-sen as provisional president of the new Republic of China on 30 December 1911 threatened to plunge the country into full-scale civil war. Yuan Shi-kai had been appointed prime minister of the Republican government on 13 November but had expected to be elevated to the presidency. Sun Yat-sen realized that the future of the Revolution was now in doubt and that if Yuan wanted he could use his Beiyang Army to take power at any time. He also realized that both he and his Republican colleagues were not yet ready to run China. In reality China needed a military strongman like Yuan to hold the country together, at least in the short term. Meanwhile Sun and his political allies could learn how best to govern such a vast and unruly country. Sun pragmatically agreed that the best course was for him to step down from the office of president and be replaced by Yuan on three conditions. These were that the Republic's new capital should be in Nanking instead of Peking, that Yuan should be inaugurated there, and that most importantly he should abide by the newly agreed constitution. Yuan agreed to the conditions in late February 1912 and was escorted to Nanking where he was inaugurated on 10 March. During his absence from Peking, northern troops went on the rampage which was seen by some as a subtle threat by Yuan. The implied threat was that if he was not in power then chaos and anarchy would follow. Sun retired from politics and left the country and new elections were promised in early 1913. Until then Yuan would be allowed to govern China with the help of appointed ministers.

During these important events in 1911 and 1912, the foreign powers had adopted a policy of strict neutrality. They were happy to stand back and let the new Republic stand or fall by its own decisions – whatever the outcome a weak China was better for all Western nations. From the outside Yuan was seen as a popular figure who would give China the firm leadership it required in its first years as a new democracy. When the election came the results were far from clear, but the Kuomintang Party formed by Sun Yat-sen won most seats in the parliament, or house of representatives. The most prominent Kuomintang politician in Sun's absence, Sung Chiao-jen, now made speeches at rallies and political meetings. He stated that Yuan no longer had a mandate for his presidency and that all his unelected ministers should be dismissed. On 20 March 1913 Sung was assassinated at Shanghai Railway Station and Yuan was immediately implicated in his death. The death of Sung left the Kuomintang leaderless and the other weaker politicians unwilling to challenge Yuan. Yuan Shi-kai, confident now that his power was unchallenged, arranged a huge £25,000,000 loan from a five-nation banking consortium. This loan was to pay for the Beiyang Army and to expand and re-equip it to make sure that Yuan remained in power. In May 1913 Yuan felt secure enough to ban the Kuomintang Party and outlaw its leadership. It was now clear to Sun Yat-sen that the whole future of the Revolutionary cause in China was threatened by Yuan. He secretly returned from Japan where he had spent his short retirement and began planning for an armed resistance to



A young officer of the new Republican Army poses for the studio cameraman wearing a uniform adapted from his pre-1911 Imperial clothing. His old Imperial tunic – with safety pin holding the collar shut – and cap have Republican insignia added. A shortage of new uniforms means that he has had to improvise by wearing a pair of civilian trousers.

Yuan. This, he hoped, would be led by the Kuomintang and would also incorporate any pro-Revolutionary warlords and their armies.

The Republican Army 1912–14

The new Republican Army that emerged from the 1911 Revolution was a mixture of former soldiers of the Imperial Army and volunteers who had fought to overthrow the Qing dynasty. There were approximately 800,000–1,000,000 men in this huge army, about 500,000 of whom were the Revolutionary volunteers. After the Revolution many of these men returned to civilian life and those who were students returned to their studies. But amongst the volunteers were thousands of men and youths who had been unemployed or had toiled in hard-labouring jobs before the Revolution. These men simply did not want to return to their previous hard life and preferred to become professional soldiers. However, most of the new Republican Army's officers were ex-Imperial Army men who, now the Revolution was over, did not wish to command these amateurs. Had there been a shortage of soldiers then the volunteers could have been absorbed into the regular army but this was not the case. This would lead to difficulties when attempts were made to reduce the size of the force.

During the Revolutionary period the military organization of many formations had been deliberately broken up. It had been the policy of the Revolution's military leaders to separate surrendering or mutinous Imperial troops where possible. This was in order to prevent any of them changing their minds and attempting to rejoin the Imperial Army. The break-up of Imperial units had happened far more in the southern and central Chinese provinces. The better organized ex-Imperial units in the northern provinces had mainly been allowed to stay as they were. In the south the old units were replaced by a large number of volunteer regiments which were given the designations of pre-1911 units. These units were a mere shadow of their predecessors and most were skeleton units with an HQ staff and a few troops. Again in the north the former Imperial units had been kept more or less at their former strengths and new recruits were brought in to replace any losses. When Yuan Shi-kai was inaugurated as president of China in April 1912 he was keen to create a Republican Army which kept the best features of the Imperial Army.

The plan was for the army to have a regular first-line regular force and then a first reserve and second reserve force. At first the newly organized Republican Army was to have a strength of 40 divisions but at a meeting in February 1913 it was decided to increase it to 50 divisions.

This projected force of 50 divisions would be divided up amongst China's provinces depending on their population, size and resources. There was also a radical plan for a new gendarmarie which was to be a paramilitary police force. It would have a strength of 5,500 officers and 125,000 men, and would be largely responsible for controlling banditry and generally keeping the peace. Norwegian instructors were supposed to train the gendarmarie but the force never got off the ground, probably due to budgetary constraints. Yuan knew that for any of these plans to work he would have to first disband the unruly and in his eyes untrustworthy volunteer units which had fought in the Revolution. A disbandment schedule was introduced which would allow for the peaceful reduction of the army and loans were raised from foreign banks to finance it. China was plagued in the aftermath of the Revolution by a series of mutinies, many caused by the fear of disbandment. As discussed above, for many soldiers, the loss of their army career meant destitution or, at best, a return to a living made by hard labour. The undisciplined soldiers of many Republican Army units did not help their cause by hanging around in cities causing trouble at the slightest provocation. Regardless of the soldiers' opposition, the first 84,000 troops were disbanded in July and August 1912 with only a token compensation payment from the government.

Now they had learned how to use a rifle, many of these soldiers spurned a return to civilian life and went straight into banditry. Those who became bandits were often dealt with swiftly by their ex-comrades who wanted to prove their worth to the army, creating a seemingly endless cycle of violence throughout the country. By August 1913 after further large-scale reductions in the size of the army it was estimated to have 500,000 soldiers. This total had grown to 588,000 by the end of the year after more reliable troops had been recruited to fight against the rebels when the Second Revolution broke out in July. After the defeat of the 1913 Revolution no excuse was now needed to disband units of troops from Fukien, Kiangsi, Anhwei, Hunan and Kiangsu provinces who had supported the rebellion.

By 1914 President Yuan Shi-kai believed that he could no longer rely on the loyalty of many of his army commanders. To be able to counter any rebellions by disloyal generals he decided to raise a new army which would have a personal loyalty to him. His army was based on the standard regiments and his aim was to recruit enough men to form ten divisions. He was careful to only accept men from the Beiyang Army into his force whose officers could be trusted. Yuan took his non-commissioned officers from

The Bai Lang Rebellion

The Bai Lang Rebellion was a large-scale rebellion launched by the most famous bandit leader in modern China. Bai Lang, which translates as 'White Wolf', led a large army of bandits which terrorized large parts of central and western China from 1911 until 1914. Bai Lang was born in 1873 in Honan province into a wealthy family and started his adult life holding down a number of respectable positions including a period as a government salt transporter. He also saw some service strangely enough considering his later career as an anti-bandit militiaman. However in 1897 he became involved in a brawl. Unfortunately the man he was fighting died and Bai was sent to prison. After his release he seriously considered becoming a bandit but at his family's insistence he instead joined the army. He proved to be a good soldier and after rising through the ranks was even sent to Japan for military training. After returning to China he served as an adjutant in the Imperial Army to General Wu Lu-chen who was killed during the 1911 Revolution. The general had been in favour of the Revolution and had been killed on the orders of General Yuan Shi-kai. Bai returned home where he found it difficult to settle, especially when his family's crops failed due to severe storms. He then, like many in his district, decided to join the bandit gang of Tu Ch'i-pin where his military expertise soon saw him rise to become one of its leaders. By 1913 he was in command of the bandit gang, whose numbers had risen steadily to a staggering 30,000 men by this point.

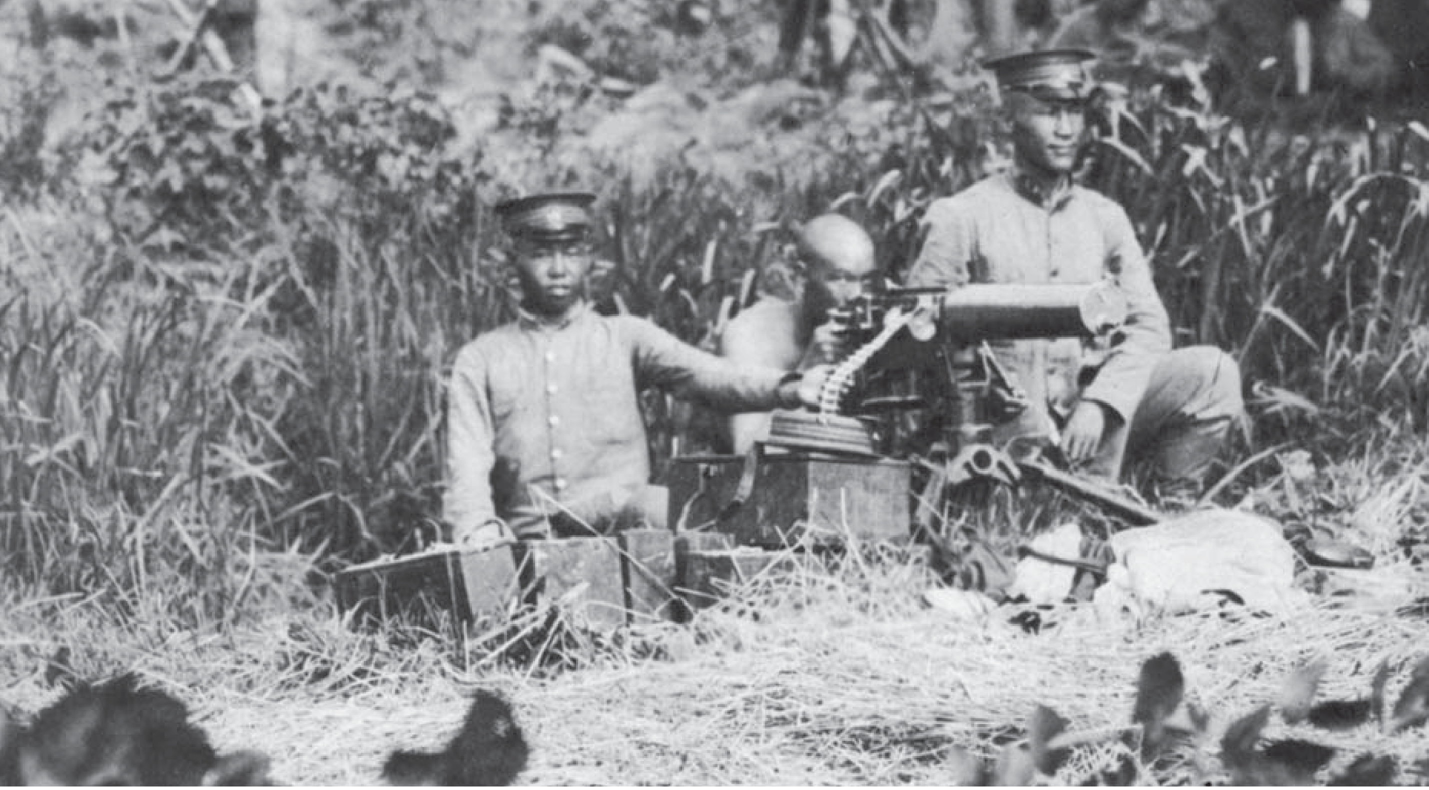
During the Second Revolution in 1913 he was persuaded by the southern Revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen to join the anti-Yuan Shi-kai rebellion. His bandit army was now a mixture of ordinary bandits, rebellious peasants, members of secret societies and former soldiers all with grudges against the government of Yuan Shi-kai. Both during and after the abortive Second Revolution Bai and his army attacked a reported 50 cities and ranged across five provinces. His army was given various grand titles including 'Citizens' Punitive Army' and 'The Army to Punish Yuan Shi-kai'. Bai's men marched across the provinces of Honan, Anhwei, Hupei, Shansi and Kansu and were joined by thousands of new volunteers. Bai advocated a basic socialist policy which included attacking the power of the landlords and an anti-taxation campaign. His men killed magistrates, landlords and other local officials and became a real threat to anyone who was not an ordinary peasant. When Bai's army entered the western province of Kansu they found that they faced much stiffer opposition from the traditionalist Muslim warlords who ruled this remote region. Bai and his army were now faced by armed opposition from several military factions including the armies of Szechwan, troops of the Beiyang Army and the armies of Kansu under the command of Generals Ma An-liang and Ma Ch'i-hsi. The army of neighbouring Tibet also attacked Bai's bandits whenever they tried to stray across the Sino-Tibetan border. The armies of the traditional and Muslim province of Kansu who supported Yuan Shi-kai became particularly bitter enemies of Bai. In Kansu the Muslim population supported their imans who preached support for their provincial warlords and the Peking government. This led to Bai's army attacking Muslim towns and cities and killing and raping the civilian population. Bitter warfare then followed with the Kansu forces gradually wearing down Bai's increasingly demoralized army. Tibetan forces attacked his troops and drove them back into Kansu where they were in turn attacked by the Kansu armies. Bai Lang died in 1914, a few days after being wounded in a skirmish. His corpse was decapitated and his head was put on display by Kansu troops. Other sources say that he disappeared in Shansi province and that his body was never found. In revenge for his rebellion Yuan Shi-kai had Bai's family tomb desecrated and his ancestors' corpses cut into pieces. After the death of Bai his army lost heart and its remnants were destroyed in further fighting during 1914 against the army of the 'Shansi Warlord', Yen Hsi-shan.

One of the leaders of the July 1913 Second Revolution, Huang-Hsing stands with some of his men in Kiangu province. Huang was not a military man but gave himself the rank of field marshal during the revolution. He had also fought during the 1911 Revolution and had proved a good if untrained commander.

the military academies and all officers and men were made to take an oath of allegiance to him personally. By 1915 the army had reached a strength of four infantry regiments, one artillery regiment and one machine-gun company. The raising of this personal army caused resentment from many high-ranking officers in the Republican Army. Although they had supported his role as a strong-arm president in 1912 they did not want to be controlled from Peking by a dictator. When Yuan revealed his plan to install himself as emperor of a new Imperial dynasty in 1916 the opposition of the Republican commanders grew. They now realized that Yuan would now use his newly raised army as a future Imperial Guard.

THE SECOND REVOLUTION

After Sun Yat-sen had stepped down from the presidency in favour of Yuan Shi-kai in 1912, a new democratic China did not develop as had been hoped. Yuan became more and more authoritarian and tried to take as much power as he could while listening less and less to other politicians. Unsurprisingly in July 1913 a rebellion broke out in parts of China which was aimed at checking Yuan's power and supporting Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang Party. The 'Second Revolution' of 1913 was a series of poorly organized rebellions launched in seven Yangtze provinces against the



A Maxim machine-gun crew of the Yuan Shi-kai Republican Army fires towards rebel lines during the July 1913 Second Revolution. The pro-Sun Yat-sen rebellion was poorly organized and was soon put down by the superior forces of the Chinese president.

presidency of Yuan Shi-kai. There was widespread disquiet about the way that Yuan, supported by his vice president, Li Yuan-hung, had forced Sun out of his office. Yuan had soon made it clear that he intended to govern on his own terms and that Sun Yat-sen and his Kuomintang had no chance of regaining office via the ballot box. Yuan was also suspected of being behind the March assassination of the popular Kuomintang politician Sung Chiao-jen. Although the Revolution's primary aim was supposed to be about removing Yuan from power there were several other contributory factors behind its launch. Several of the Revolutionary leaders were commanding troops whose units had been disbanded after the end of the First Revolution in 1912. Many of these officers and their men were resentful that their role in the 1911 Revolution had been forgotten and their services were no longer required. Sun had realized that he could not regain the presidency by democratic means and called for an armed rebellion. The rebel army was made up mainly of soldiers from the southern provinces where Sun had enjoyed the most support.

The poorly led southern volunteer soldiers, students and Kuomintang members had little training. They were initially enthusiastic but when they came up against the well-trained Northern soldiers sent against them they had little chance. Fighting began on 10 July with uncoordinated rebellions beginning in several provinces. A rebel army in Kiangsi province was led by General Li Lieh-chun, whose men successfully took the government's forts on the Po Yang Lakes. The city of Nanking joined the Revolution but others cities in the region of the rebellion did not follow suit. Heavy fighting took place in Shanghai but several suicidal attacks on the government arsenal were easily repulsed.

Yuan Shi-kai despatched some of his best troops to the rebel-held provinces over the next few weeks and by September the Revolution had been totally defeated. In August the faint-hearted Kuomintang leadership had already escaped to Japan leaving their troops to their fate. Yuan clamped down heavily on the rebels and mass executions of the defeated soldiers and their civilians took place over the subsequent months.

CHINA AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

When the First World War erupted in August 1914, China remained neutral as the new Republic was not a position to join either the Allies or the Central powers. However, from the beginning the Chinese government's sympathies were with the Allies, but lack of funds meant no military operations were possible. Imperial Japan on the other hand now grabbed the opportunity to extend its influence in China by participating in the war on the Allied side. When the Japanese declared war on Germany on 23 August they immediately despatched a military expedition to the German-held fortress of Tsingtao. The strongly-held fortress and town was part of the German concession in Shantung province which had been leased to Germany in 1898 on a 99-year lease. The siege by 24,500 Japanese with 142 artillery pieces began on 31 October 1914. Tsingtao, defended by a garrison of 3,650 Germans and a few Austro-Hungarians, fell on 16 November. For the rest of the First World War the Japanese contribution to the Allied war effort was limited to a few naval operations. These included the taking of several German-controlled islands in the Pacific which became Japanese dependencies. Japan's influence in China was now growing especially financially as all the European banks were busy financing the war in Europe. The only source of loans for the Peking government was Japan and any assistance to the Chinese would come at a heavy price.

In due course, on 18 January 1915, the Japanese government presented the Yuan Shi-kai government with their notorious 'Twenty One Demands'. These demands were divided into five with the first four just about acceptable by a weak Chinese government which wholeheartedly

Chinese labourers of the China Labour Corps in France during the Great War unload artillery shells from a munitions train. Although China did not send troops to the Western Front the thousands of labourers employed by the Allies freed up their men to fight. These men must be near the front line as they have been issued with French Adrian steel helmets.

depended on Japan for financial support. The first four demands called for the Japanese succession to Germany's rights in Shantung province; an extension of Japan's leases on its holdings in southern Manchuria to 29 years; half-ownership in the Hanyang Steel Works; and finally the Chinese were told not to acede any of their coastline to a third party. The next group of demands were always intended by the Japanese to be unacceptable but were to be used as a bargaining chip in any negotiations. Japan's diplomats wanted to give Yuan Shi-kai the opportunity to look strong by refusing the final group of demands while meekly accepting the first four. Amongst the fifth group of demands were the appointment of Japanese advisors to key Chinese government ministries and provincial councils. Another unacceptable demand was that the Chinese should grant railway leases to the Japanese in the Yangtze Valley. As expected Yuan and his ministers conceded the first four groups of demands on 9 May and totally rejected the fifth. Yuan was then able to claim a great triumph by standing up to the Japanese while opposition leaders and in particular Sun Yat-sen denounced him as a puppet of Japan.

The Chinese Labour Corps on the Western Front

Although the Chinese Republic could not provide military support for the Allied powers it could provide badly needed manpower. The fighting

General Ts'ai O was a military leader from Yunnan province who led his province in revolt when President Yuan Shi-kai proclaimed himself as the 'new' emperor of China in December 1915. Ts'ai and his supporters declared Yunnan independent from the rest of China in protest at Yuan's decision and fighting soon followed between the Yunnanese and Yuan's troops. Both men were to die in 1916 with Ts'ai succumbing to tuberculosis and cancer while Yuan died shortly after abdicating and resuming the role of president.

on the Western Front had cost the British and French catastrophic casualties which in the battle of the Somme alone reached 600,000 men. All available Allied troops were needed at the front line and as with all armies, many thousands were tied up in support and transport duties in the rear areas. Work at docks and other facilities was being done by British and French soldiers who could be released to fight if replacements could be found. From the spring of 1916 the Allied powers began negotiating with the Peking government about the possibility of hiring Chinese workers as labourers. In due course a processing centre was set up in Shantung province near to the British concession of Weihaiwei. Here tens of thousands of willing Chinese volunteers driven by poverty to sign up for service on the Western Front were prepared. The first boatload of 543 labourers was shipped via the Indian Ocean through the Suez Canal but their ship was sunk in the Mediterranean by a German U-boat. From then on the Allies decided to bring other ships full of labourers across the Pacific Ocean to Canada and from there to Europe. Once the labourers arrived in France they were employed in unloading cargoes in docks and general work in railway marshalling yards. Nearer to the front line they were employed in digging trenches and in burying the dead from the battlefield. The men were paid 20 Chinese dollars when they left China and then 10 dollars a month which was sent back to their families. Working 10-hour days, seven days a week they lived in poor conditions and suffered from the damp weather and change in diet. Although non-belligerents throughout the war, the Chinese labourers' camps were bombed by the Germans. On several occasions in retaliation the Chinese took French rifles and broke into nearby POW camps and killed the German inmates. By 1917 there were a total of 54,000 labourers serving on the Western Front and by the end of the war this had reached 96,000 men. Apart from the 543 men lost at sea at the start of their service a further 2,000 died from illness or from unexploded mines and shells when clearing battlefields.

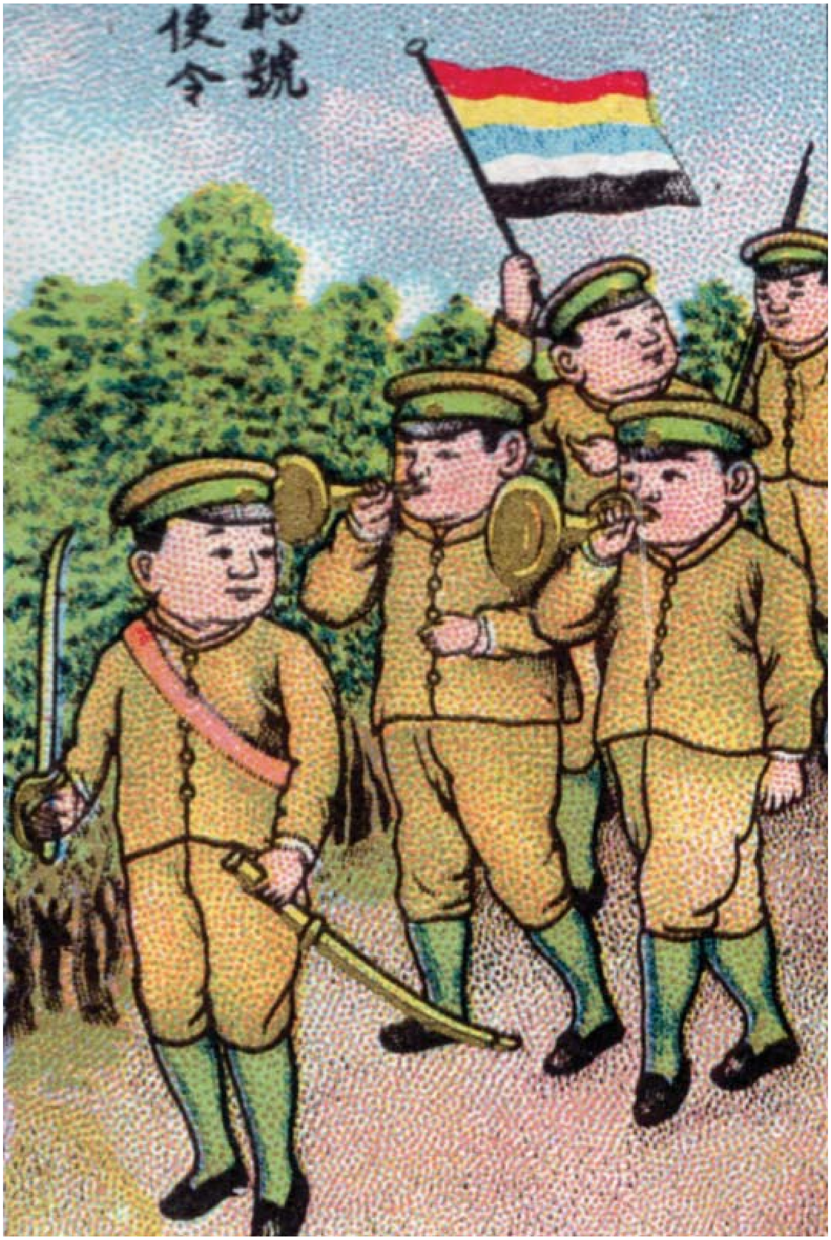
THE ASCENDENCY OF EMPEROR YUAN SHI-KAI

Although Yuan's presidency had not been seriously challenged since his victory over the abortive 1913 Second Revolution, he was aware of the possibility of further revolts. Between 1912 and 1915 he brought in a number of measures to ensure his total control of China. These included the replacement of any unreliable military commanders with men loyal to him, especially in the more volatile south. All prominent opposition politicians went into exile if they could escape the country and Yuan's secret police. In May 1914 he proclaimed a new constitution which granted him powers to declare war, impose taxes and appoint all officials. At the same time he dissolved parliament and all the provincial assemblies which he deemed to be a hotbed for independence movements.

He also officially extended the term of his presidency from five to ten years but made it known informally that it was in fact limitless. At the same time he instituted martial law and launched a terror campaign whose victims included many members of the higher classes. His reaction to the Second Revolution was severe with an estimated 21,000 'rebels' executed in Honan province alone.

Whatever measures Yuan imposed he still did not feel sufficiently secure in his presidency and his advisors came up with a unique solution. During 1915 some of his close advisors – including, surprisingly, a US citizen – began to suggest to Yuan that the Chinese people would like him to restore the monarchy. They were not suggesting bringing back the young ex-Emperor Pu Yi living in isolation in the Forbidden City in Peking. Instead they suggested that Yuan himself should become the new 'modern' emperor. Yuan was flattered by their entreaties and unsurprisingly did not take too much persuasion to begin planning the audacious move. It was only three years since the fall of the Qing dynasty and many of the

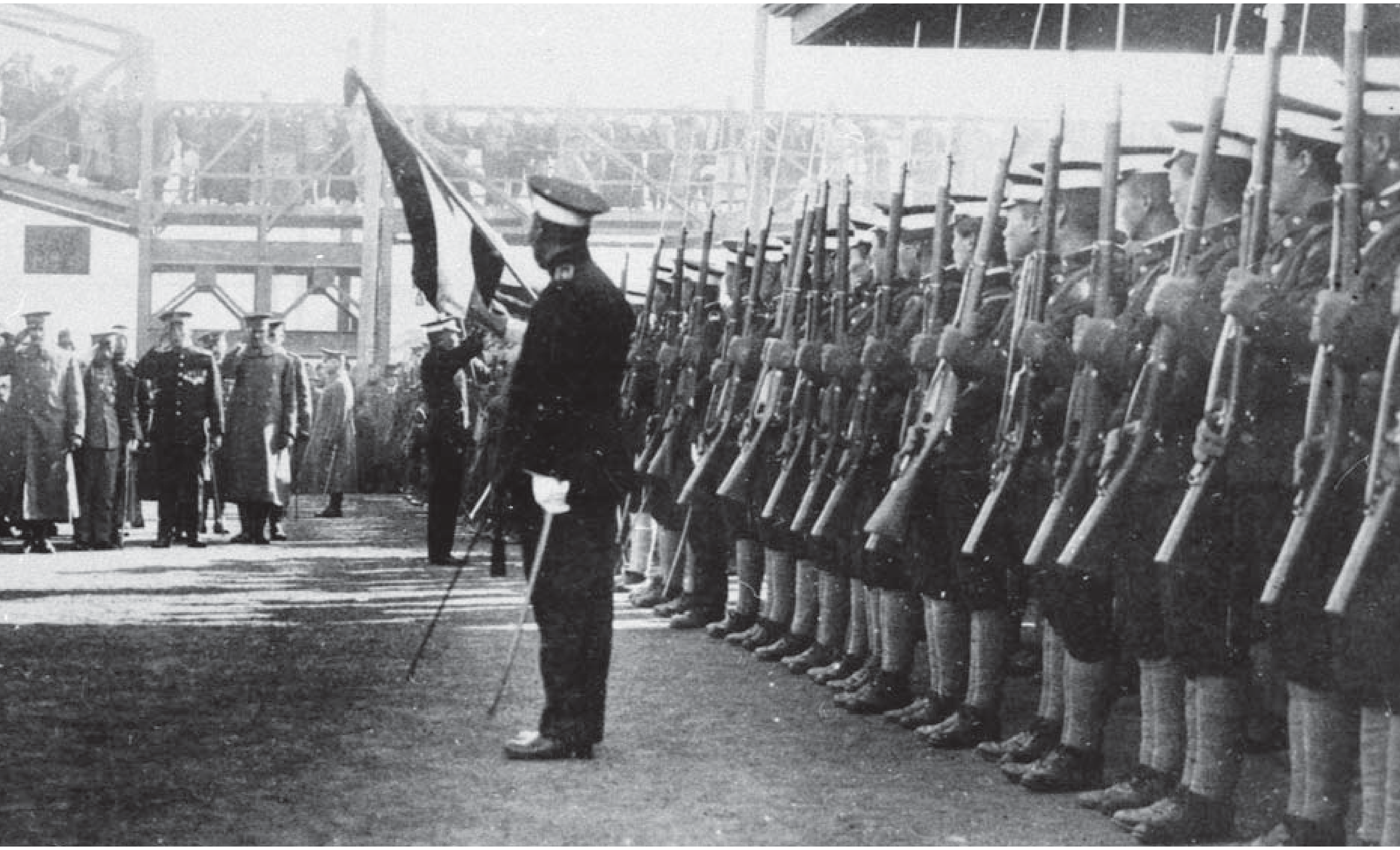
This patriotic card from a Chinese children's game hoped to instil some national pride in the people of Republican China. The card mimics those produced by the Japanese who tried to teach their children from a young age to be proud of their country. In China, where the country was divided into regional governments by the warlords, this was a difficult task.



more traditional Chinese looked back at the Imperial period with nostalgia. Yuan's advisors believed that these conservative elements within Chinese society would give him their wholehearted support. Yuan had always been a shrewd operator but on this occasion he allowed himself to be persuaded that his elevation to emperorship would be a popular decision. Although he no longer faced much open opposition Yuan needed to legitimize his proposed emperorship with some kind of popular mandate. He decided to convene a specially organized 'Representative Assembly' of his cronies and any politician who could be bought. Unsurprisingly, the assembly voted 1,993 to none to ask Yuan to ascend the throne by popular demand. Yuan signalled his determination to answer this request by ordering a 40,000-piece Imperial dinner service at the cost of 1.4 million Yuan. At the same time he ordered the making of two Imperial robes for his coronation at 400,000 Yuan a piece. This coupled with his formal pronouncement of a new Imperial dynasty with himself as its first emperor resulted in immediate armed opposition.

The National Protection War

The military response to Yuan's proclamation of his emperorship was the National Protection War. Because of the motives behind the rebellion it was also commonly known as the 'Anti-Monarchy War'. Yuan's proclamation in October 1915 caused immediate outrage in many parts of China, particularly in the southern provinces. Over the next few months, as news of Yuan's proclamation filtered through, a number of anti-Yuan rebellions broke out. By 12 December, when Yuan officially crowned himself, the anti-Yuan movement had gathered enough momentum for several provinces to consider seceding from China. On 25 December two of the strongest military leaders of Yunnan province, General Tang Ji-yao and General Ts'ai O, declared their province's independence. The two generals raised the National Protection Army, 10,000 strong, which was put under the command of General Ts'ai O. He launched an offensive against the north but faced stiff opposition from forces loyal to Yuan. At first the Yunnanese rebels were isolated and did not know how much support they could expect from their fellow provincial leaders. However, many of Yuan Shi-kai's generals were not keen to go to war on his behalf and several made their excuses. Feng Kuo-chang, the commander of troops at Nanking, said he couldn't go because he was too ill while the Kwangsi Governor General Lu Jung't'ing prevaricated. He eventually made his point succinctly by declaring his province's independence from the Peking government. Yuan did, however, have the support of his own battle-hardened army and he sent a 30,000-strong force southwards to deal with the rebellions. He also had the support of some of the older Yunnanese military leaders who were in control of Sinkiang province in the west of China. These generals



Smartly turned-out Republican Chinese soldiers present arms to a visiting US military officer in 1917. China declared war on the Central powers of Germany and Austro-Hungary on 14 August. No Chinese troops fought in the war although there were plans to send an expeditionary corps to France. Many thousands of Chinese, mainly from Shantung province, did provide a vital labour force on the Western Front.

were from the Muslim Ma family, traditional supporters of the old Imperial system who commanded armies with thousands of cavalry. When several of the Ma's Allies declared that they wanted to join the anti-Yuan rebellion they were all beheaded at a banquet on New Year's Day in 1916. Under the umbrella of the so-called National Protection Movement, a number of anti-Yuan armies began to advance from Yunnan into neighbouring Szechwan province.

During the first few months of 1916 the now 80,000-strong pro-Yuan army was constantly campaigning against the various rebel forces with neither side strong enough to totally defeat the other. Yuan's troops were heavily defeated at least once during the January to March campaign and he realized that military force could not guarantee his position. By March international pressure had begun to bear down on Yuan Shi-kai and his government with the opposition of Japan to his emperorship being particularly significant. The secession of further provinces including

Kwangsi, Kwangtung, Hunan, Shansi, Shantung, Kiangsi, Kiangsu and Chekiang finally convinced Yuan that his role as emperor was over. Yuan abdicated on 22 March and reverted back to his former position as president, dying of kidney disease not long after, on 6 June.

THE BEGINNING OF THE WARLORD ERA

The death of Yuan Shi-kai in 1916 was bound to have a significant effect on China, for whatever his many faults he had held the various military groupings in north, central and south China together by sheer force of personality. Now with his death the military governors of the various provinces began to see themselves as separate and began to regard their provinces as their own personal territory. Officially these 'tuchans' controlled their provinces at the behest of the government in Peking but several now started to act independently of any central authority. Many acted as petty rulers, collecting their own taxes and paying their own armies out of the provincial funds. Before long the military governors acquired the title of warlords and began to earn it by fighting neighbouring generals in territorial conflicts. For the next 12 years these warlords and their armies were to dominate China and bring much suffering to the Chinese people.

This break up of China had already begun under Yuan's rule as opposition to his presidency and then his self-elevation to emperor had meant the breakaway of several provinces. Although the provincial governors now rarely officially declared their independence from the Peking government they took little notice of its edicts. Some 'tuchans' preferred to stand alone while others formed alliances or 'cliques' with other warlords. The Beiyang Army provided the most powerful of these cliques with two of its prominent commanders – generals Feng Kuo-chang and Tuan Ch'i-jui – forming their own power bases. Feng formed the Chihli Clique which was based in the province from which it took its name and the Anhwei Clique formed by Tuan was similarly based in the province it was named after. Both cliques drew their officers and men from the ranks of the Beiyang Army. A rival but initially less powerful clique based in the north-east and Manchuria was led by an ex-bandit, Chang Tso-lin. This Fengtien Clique had some officers and men from the Beiyang Army but also recruited them from its Manchurian base. Other cliques were formed in the south of China with the Yunnan and Kwangsi cliques already dominating theirs and neighbouring provinces.

Japanese troops stationed in Manchuria in the 1910s preparing to go on patrol in the region of the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railway which ran through Chinese territory. The Japanese were allowed to station troops along the railway after their victory over its previous owners, the Russians, in 1905. Officially the Japanese were only supposed to operate within a 62-metre strip running alongside the railway but constantly flouted these rules.

Sun Yat-sen and his Kuomintang Party totally rejected this break-up of China into separate fiefdoms and he called for national unity. When it became apparent that he was wasting his time Sun moved his supporters south to Canton in Kwangtung province. In September 1918 he formed his southern government in opposition to the warlord-controlled Peking regime. With hardly any military forces of his own Sun had to rely on the goodwill and protection of the local military leaders, who were themselves usually at odds with the northern warlords. Amidst this chaotic situation Sun tried to convince the outside world that his Canton government was the only legitimate one in China. For the next few years a series of smaller wars were fought throughout China as the warlords tried to extend the territory under their control. All three of the major cliques built up their military forces ready for an inevitable showdown.

THE WAR PARTICIPATION ARMY 1918–20

China formerly declared war on Germany and Austro-Hungary on 14 August 1917. Apart from the Chinese Labour Corps already serving on the Western Front there was little else they could do to help the Allied war effort. The Chinese prime minister General Tuan Ch'i-jui returned to office in March 1918 and was again in a strong position. Although Tuan was in theory under the orders of President Feng Kuo-chang he was the real power broker in China. Tuan secured loans from Japan totalling $120 million with the intention of using the funds to build up his military strength. He could use the excuse that his 'War Participation Army' was being prepared for service on the Western Front. Japanese arms shipments began to arrive in China, and rather than sharing them out between the different armies they were all given to Tuan's troops. The arms sold to China in 1918

included 20,000 rifles, 120 field guns, 60 mountain guns and 60 machine guns. Other orders placed but never delivered included 5,000 machine guns which would have been three times the total number eventually in service in China in the 1920s.With the arms shipped to them Tuan's War Participation Army reached a strength of three divisions and four mixed brigades. However it was not the size of the army which made it formidable

but its standard of equipment and weaponry. Compared to most other Chinese armies of the period it was lavishly equipped and every man had a rifle. Almost as important each man also had a full set of leather equipment with pouches to put his ammunition in.

Opposite page
Northern Chinese soldiers parade beside the train taking them to the front line during fighting in 1917. The men are from the Fengtien Army which had only recently come under the control of the Manchurian warlord, Chang Tso-lin. All the other ranks in the picture wear padded cotton uniforms with cloth curtains added to their caps to keep their ears and neck warm.

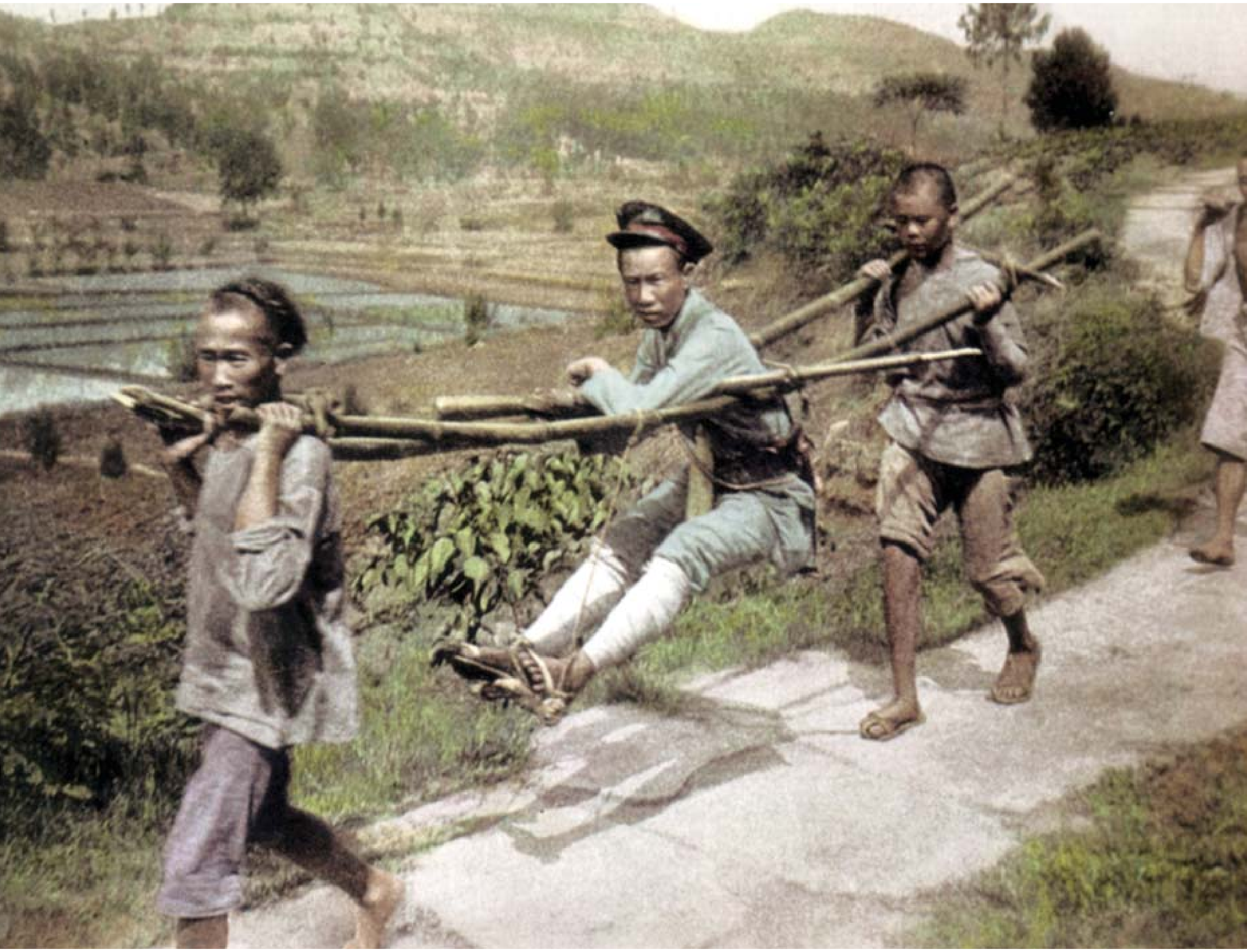
THE IMPERIAL RESTORATION

The first five years of the new Republic had not been a success and the ordinary Chinese citizen had benefited little from the removal of the Qing dynasty. In the Forbidden City in Peking the 'Last Emperor' Pu Yi continued to rule over his Imperial household. Under the terms of his abdication he had been allowed to keep all his old privileges but only within the confines of the Imperial palaces. Although there were still a few pro-Imperialists in China by 1917, one of the most influential just happened to have a large body of troops under his command. General Chang Hsun was an 'old school' Imperialist officer who still refused to let his troops remove their pre-1911 queues. He was regarded by the other Republican generals as a harmless maverick who could still be trusted to obey orders issued by the Peking government. Chang had been planning for a while to restore the emperor to the throne if possible and had received the tacit support of several warlords. He himself did not think that the time was right to attempt the restoration but events were to overtake him in the spring of 1917. The Chinese President Li Yuan-hung was in disagreement with his Prime Minister Tuan Ch'i-jui. Tuan wanted China to declare war on Germany and to join the Allies but Li was against this plan. Although Tuan was prime minister, he was the main power broker in China at the time and Li needed support from outside the capital to hold him off. Chang Hsun was the only militarist who did not fear Tuan and so Li asked him to come to Peking to negotiate between them. When in late June 1917 Chang marched into Peking at the head of his escort force of 5,000 men, people who knew of his plans expected him to immediately restore the emperor to the throne. Instead he hesitated as he knew that Tuan was only 80 miles away in Tientsin, with substantial military forces. On 30 June, Chang was leaving the theatre when he was approached by two young warlords who told him that everything was ready now for a restoration. Chang did not want to go back on his word to his co-conspirators and set everything in motion and persuaded the young ex-emperor to allow him to launch a restoration. Imperial flags

Marshal Tuan C'hi-jui was the military leader of the Anhwei warlord clique and the most powerful military leader in China from 1916 until 1920. He controlled the government in Peking and served as its prime minister on two separate occasions. When his powerfully armed army was sent into battle in the Anhwei-Chihli War of 1920 it was speedily defeated and he lost power.

were hoisted all over the parts of Peking that his troops controlled and barricades were erected to defend the restored emperor.

In his headquarters in the city of Tientsin, Tuan immediately condemned the restoration even though at one time he had been in secret support of it. He gathered an estimated 50,000 troops, gave them the title 'Army to Punish the Rebels' and marched on the capital. Within a few days the Republican troops had surrounded the Imperialist positions and Chang's outnumbered troops had little chance of success. The Forbidden City was bombed by a lone Republican plane and some half-hearted



A warlord soldier from Szechwan province in the south-west of China is carried to war by two coolies on a litter in 1917. The hundreds of wars fought in the Southern provinces of China from 1911 to 1928 were normally small affairs. They often involved a few hundred men on each side although the total number of soldiers in Szechwan in the mid-1920s was estimated at 300,000.

Imperialist troops began to surrender. Chang tried to negotiate an honourable surrender but was refused by Tuan and therefore had little option but to fight. Knowing that his restoration had been a abject failure, Chang tried to deflect the wrath of the Republicans away from the emperor. He vowed to fight to the last man but his troops were not as keen as he was to die for the emperor. Already an estimated 100 men had been killed in fire-fights with the Republican troops surrounding them. Some of his troops then arrested Chang and took him by car to the Netherlands Embassy where he sought refuge. After only 12 days the Imperial

Restoration was over and Chang Hsun and his officers were in hiding waiting to escape from Peking. The 'Comic Opera' nature of the whole restoration included the finding by Republican troops of hundreds of abandoned false pigtails all over Peking. They had been discarded by the Imperial supporters who had bought them to wear to show their loyalty to the briefly reinstated emperor. Pu Yi was allowed to return to his court in the Forbidden City where he remained until thrown out by the army of another militarist in 1924. Significantly, this failed restoration ensured that Chang Hsun, who had been a powerful figure in the Beiyang Army, was removed from the political and military stage.

THE NORTH–SOUTH WAR

After the death of Yuan Shi-kai in 1916 the southern Chinese provinces that had opposed his presidency and his brief reign as emperor were still in virtual rebellion. By 1917 the more powerful northern militarists had tired of the 'troublesome' southerners and planned for a military expedition to bring them back into line. The province of Hunan had already become the focus for the dispute between north and south when the Peking government tried to replace its popular governor General T'an Yen-k'ai. Peking's candidate for the governorship of Hunan was immediately rejected by the Hunnanese as a northern 'lackey'. In the late spring of 1917 northern troops had to be sent south to support the new governor, but a number of native Hunnanese units began armed opposition. They were joined by troops from neighbouring Kwangsi and Kwangtung provinces and by November the northern forces and the new governor were forced to flee. The failure of the 1917 campaign in Hunan led to the fall from power of Prime Minister Tuan Ch'i-jui as he was held accountable for the lamentable performance of his military appointees.

After a brief respite, during which a peace settlement was unsuccessfully attempted, the northern generals prepared a much larger expeditionary army of 150,000 men. The northern army had been raised from the forces of several military 'cliques' or alliances that had formed since Yuan Shi-kai's death. Two of the main cliques, the Chihli and the Fengtien, now contributed troops to the expeditionary army. In the meantime troops in the west of Hupei province had declared their independence from Peking. They planned to join forces with the Hunnanese to expel all northern forces from their province. This latest development was a direct threat to Peking's control over central China and this at least for the time being united all the northern military factions. When the expeditionary army advanced south in early 1918 it was under the command of a Chihli Clique officer, General Wu Pei-fu. Wu was one of the most competent officers in China at the time and was to rise to great heights during the early 1920s. His well-trained 3rd Division led the advance and after crossing into Hunan the army took several towns before capturing the provincial capital of Changsha on 26 March. The following day General Chang Ching-yao, commander of the 7th Division, was made governor of Hunan. Wu and his army continued to advance southwards and on 21 April took the important south Hunan city of Hengyang. A second northern force then entered eastern Hunan from the north under the command of General Chang Huai-chih. This army was made up of troops from Kiangsi, Shantung and Anhwei provinces, again drawn from various cliques. Other northern troops had entered western Hunan and the overwhelming forces now in the province forced the Hunnanese and their Allies to its southern borders. By the end of April, Wu Pei-fu had tired of the fighting and refused to continue his army's advance. Significantly he was unhappy at the appointment of Chang Ching-yao as Hunnanese governor after he had led all the fighting on behalf of the north.

As the war wound down during 1918, the province was now controlled by armies that were using the conflict as a pretext for collecting heavy taxes from the population. The northern generals were determined to gain something from the war and filled their war chests at the expense of the impoverished Hunnanese. Far worse was to follow as the province suffered terrible hardships as the northern troops including newly arrived Fengtien units ran amok. They killed thousands of Hunnanese in revenge for their rebellion and even when they didn't slaughter the population of a village or town, they ransacked them. The city of Liling serves as an example of the devastation wrought by the northern troops. Out of a population of 60,000 people, 22,000 were reported killed and 15,000 houses were burnt to the ground. This kind of depravation was to become commonplace throughout the 1920s in China. It was usually caused when soldiers from one province occupied another 'alien' province for any period of time. Chinese soldiers of the period often had little or no affinity with the people of another province. As warlord soldiers campaigned in the 1916–28 period in distant provinces these kind of atrocities would be repeated again and again.

CHINA AT WAR WITH HER NEIGHBOURS

China and the Russian Civil War

The Chinese Army in Manchuria was to become involved in a number of clashes during the period of the Russian Civil War. Siberia bordered China's Manchurian territories, and as the Russian conflict extended into Siberia it often spilled over the border. Chinese troops clashed with both Communist and White Russian forces but also aided the anti-Communist resistance. Their first military involvement was in the suppressing of a revolt in the Manchurian city of Harbin in December 1917.

The Chinese Eastern Railway was the section of the Trans-Siberian Railway which crossed Manchurian territory to the Russian port of Vladivostok. Because the Russians had leased the land adjoining the railway from the Chinese, some workers regarded this as Bolshevik-owned territory. Russian railway workers from the Chinese Eastern Railway had formed workers' committees in support of the Bolsheviks. The workers' committees attempted to take over the city using arms captured from Chinese guards or that they had previously hidden in secret caches. Chinese troops moved in to quash the revolt and the Communist leaders were captured and thrown into jail.

The Chinese suppression of any other pro-Bolshevik activity allowed White Russians along the Eastern Chinese Railway to form a White Russian government in the railway zone. They were led by the former chief of the railway, Lieutenant-General Dimitri Horvath but his regime had only limited military forces. His government relied instead on the protection of both Japanese and Chinese troops stationed along the railway to keep the Bolsheviks across the border in Siberia at bay. In 1918 the Siberian White Russians had managed to establish a more substantial government at Vladivostok under Admiral Kolchak. This regime needed Allied aid to survive and the Entente powers wanted to rescue the large amount of equipment and weaponry stored in the city. The munitions had been sent there to support the 50,000-strong Czech Legion, a former foreign unit of the Imperial Russian Army which was now fighting its way out of Siberia against Bolshevik opposition. An international intervention force was sent to Vladivostok in August 1918 which included British, French, Rumanian, Italian, Polish, Canadian and US troops. The vast majority of the 90,000-strong force was 70,000 Japanese troops, many of whom were already stationed in the region.

In March 1918 the Chinese government claimed that they would be sending 40,000 troops to Siberia in support of the Japanese. In reality it is

Soldiers of one of the many warlord armies during the 1916–20 period ride out on campaign on the top of their unit's baggage. All of the soldiers' kit and equipment is lashed to the heavily loaded mule cart. Most of the wars before 1920 were local affairs with sometimes only a few thousand or even hundred troops in each army.

estimated that only about 2,000 Chinese troops were officially part of the intervention but other troops were stationed at the border. When the rest of the international force left Siberia in 1920 the Japanese remained supporting the White government and fighting the Bolsheviks until 1922.

Chinese troops had also occupied the south-western part of the remote region of Tuva on the Siberian–Mongolian border from August 1918. The rest of this former Chinese territory was controlled by Mongolian and native Tuvan troops and clashes took place between the two armies. Since 1911 Tuva had been absorbed by the self-declared independent Mongolia but during the Russian Civil War it had been occupied by White Russian and then Bolshevik troops. For over a year between February 1920 and June 1921 the whole of the territory was taken over by Chinese troops. Attempts by a small Bolshevik force of 500 cavalry to take over Tuva in 1920 were defeated by the more substantial Chinese garrison. In 1921 a larger Bolshevik army supported by local troops forced the Chinese out and established the 'Tuvan People's Republic' which was eventually absorbed into the Soviet Union. Problems caused by the Civil War continued until 1922 with raids into Manchuria by renegade White Russians. These wild 'Atamans' commanded Cossack forces which had been fighting for the White Russians in Siberia before their defeat in 1920. Some, like Ataman Semenov, received Japanese military support

Soldiers of the Anhwei Clique Army march along a village street in the period just before their defeat in the 1920 war against the Chihli and Fengtien Armies. The smart uniforms, good equipment and Japanese-supplied rifles did not bring them their expected victory in 1920. During the 1916–20 period the Anhwei Army and its new weaponry had been jealously coveted by the other Chinese militarists.

and established short-lived regimes on the Siberian–Manchurian borderlands. Semenov had been raiding Chinese territory since 1917 and was joined by a group of other desperadoes like Ataman Kalymkov. When Japan withdrew its forces from Siberia in 1922, they lost the military and financial support that they heavily depended on. Many of the White Russians who had fought in Siberia were to find their way to China and fought for various warlords during the mid- to late 1920s.

China and Tibet at War 1910–39

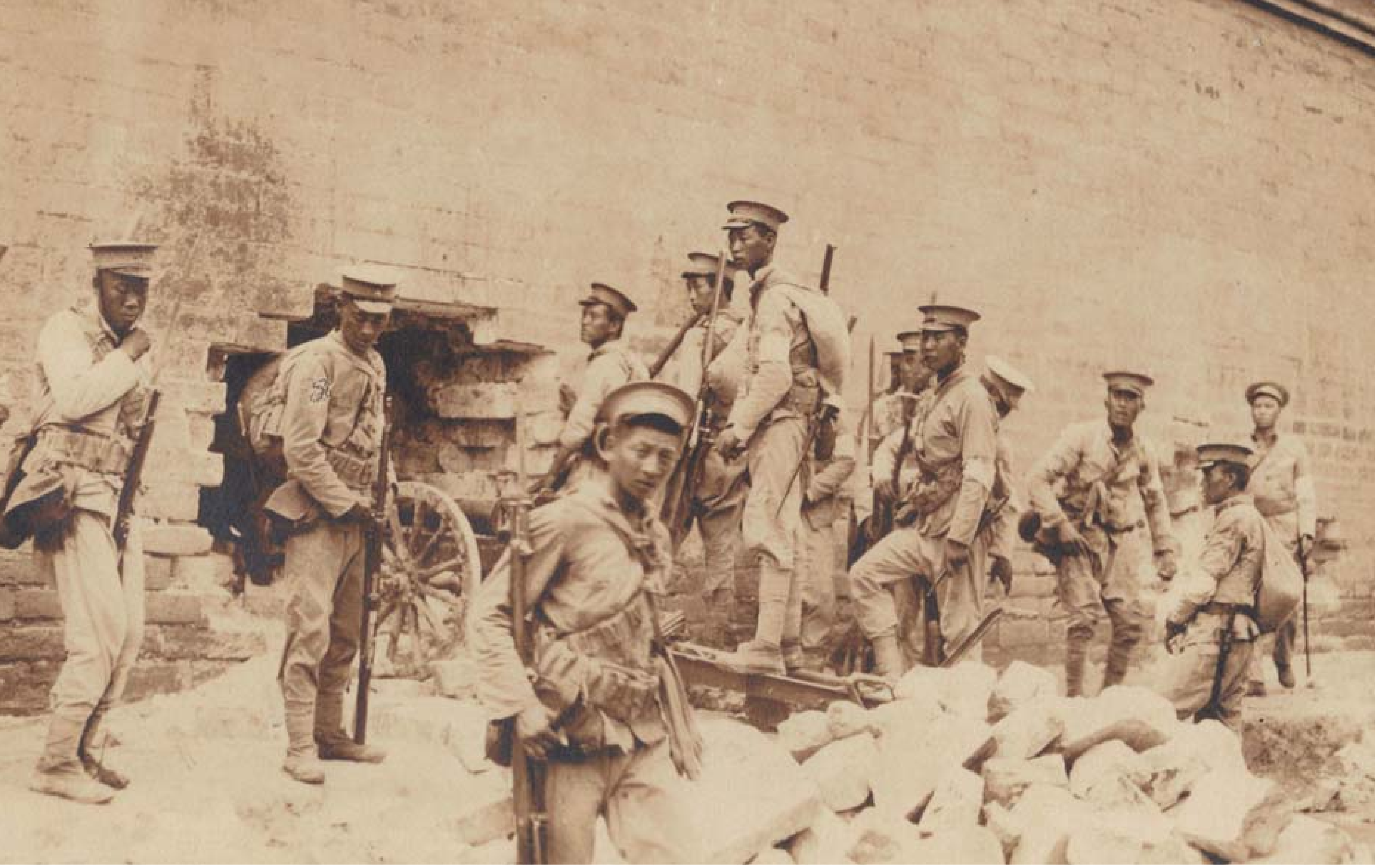
A series of border wars were fought between Imperial, Republican and Nationalist Chinese armies and the Army of Tibet throughout the first half of the 20th century. The relationship between the Himalayan nation of Tibet and China has always been strained with the former's legal status a thorny issue. China – under first the Qing dynasty and then the Republic – regarded Tibet as a Chinese province. Under the rule of the Qing dynasty the isolated nature of Tibet meant that Imperial control was very loose. In 1911 the Tibetans revolted against the Chinese troops garrisoned in Tibet and after besieging several isolated garrisons threw out the defeated troops. All the surviving Chinese troops were evacuated through British India, as agreed by the warring factions.

However by 1918 the Chinese Republic had decided to try and re-impose their rule over Tibet. Troops were sent into the eastern region of Tibet and a small but vicious conflict ensued. The war ended in a stalemate and was settled with British diplomacy. During the 1920s the Tibetans tried to increase their army to 20,000 men, but lack of arms made this unachievable. Between 1930 and 1932 a second Sino-Tibetan War was fought between the Tibetan Army and the provincial Chinese troops of Szechwan and Chinghai provinces. A Tibetan army invaded Szechwan and a low-level but brutal conflict lasted for almost two years. The Szechwan governor, General Liu Wen-Hui, at times called upon aid from his neighbouring governor in Chinghai, General Ma Pu-fang. A peace agreement signed in 1932 stipulated that the Tibetans should have control over territory to the west of the Yangtze River. During the period of the Sino-Tibetan border wars the size of the Tibetan Army fluctuated. After the establishment of a regular Tibetan Army in 1913 they received limited British military aid which continued on a small scale into the 1930s. By 1937 the Tibetan Army had a strength of 10,000 men in 20 detachments and these were armed with British Lee Enfield rifles, Vickers and Lewis machine guns as well as several batteries of mountain guns. Tibet's isolation from China saved it from Japanese invasion after 1937 but the Imperial Army showed a fleeting interest. In May 1939 a Japanese secret agent visited Tibet on a 18-month intelligence-gathering mission. His instructions were to study the culture, religion and general attitude of the Tibetans with the intention of possibly using them in the war against Nationalist China.

Mongolia 1911–22

In 1911, during the Revolution, Mongolian nationalists had taken advantage of the Imperial government's preoccupation with survival of the Qing dynasty. They had declared the province's independence and then waited in vain for the expected military response. The Mongolian religious leader Bogd Khan was proclaimed as the Great Khan 'Emperor' of Mongolia on 29 December 1911. An army for the new state was raised and was supported by money and arms from the Imperial Russian government in St Petersburg. Although the Mongolians had plans for a 20,000-strong army few young men were willing to join up. A small Russian military mission arrived in 1912 and began to train Mongol recruits and old Berdan rifles were sent to arm the troops but funds were tight. In February 1913, Russia granted the Mongolians a $1,000,000 loan which allowed for the training and equipping of a small army. The army was made up of two cavalry regiments, one machine gun company and a four-gun mountain battery with a total complement of 1,900 officers and men. It was hard to find volunteers even for this small force and Mongolia's defence was largely left to untrained irregulars.

In 1916 a strange little war was fought between the 7,000-strong army of Mongol Prince Babojab and Chinese troops in Manchuria. Prince Babojab was a former bandit leader who had started his career in 1902 and had raised troops for the Japanese during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05. For many years after 1905 he continued his bandit life, until in 1916 he was one of 22 Mongol princes who signed a petition calling for the restoration of the Qing dynasty. He secretly sought aid from the Japanese Kwangtung Army stationed in Manchuria for his plan to invade China and did receive a shipment of arms. In addition he obtained the unofficial services of a few adventurous Japanese military advisors. The Japanese wanted him and his 'rag-tag' army of bandits and adventurers to invade Manchuria with the intention of setting up a new breakaway state encompassing Manchuria, Mongolia and northern China. When his men crossed the border into western Manchuria they fought any Chinese



troops they came across and also attacked the Peking–Mukden Railway. It is difficult to envisage what might have happened had Babojab not been killed in a skirmish with Chinese soldiers, but in the event his followers did not attempt to carry on their invasion without his leadership and quickly escaped back into Mongolia.

It took the Republican government until 1919 to make up its mind to try and re-establish its control over their former province. For the Chinese the expedition to Mongolia was seen almost as a training exercise for the Republican Army, and an initial force of only a few thousand troops was prepared. Troops for the expeditionary force were to come from the former War Participation Army and it was to be renamed the 'North-western Frontier Army'. Command was given to General Hsu Shu-cheng, 'Little Hsu', one of Prime Minister Tuan Ch'i-jui's most trusted commanders. The expedition got off to a false start in July when the main train leading the advance broke down. An advance party of 4,000 soldiers then set off and in a relatively short space of time had captured the Mongolian capital of Urga. When they took over the city they demobilized what was left of the old army of the Bogd Khan and then raided their armaments store. Inside they found 5,776 modern Russian and Japanese rifles, 2,456

Republican soldiers prepare to attack the surrounded 5,000 Imperial troops who were occupying the Forbidden City during the short-lived restoration of the Chinese emperor in July 1917. The attempt to put Emperor Pu Yi back on the throne was not supported by the majority of Chinese people. Although the attempt was led by one of the most prominent commanders in the Chinese Army at the time, Chang Hsun, he did not receive the backing of any other generals and gave up after a few weeks.

General Hsu Shu-cheng is photographed meeting Mongolian civilian officials during his North-western Frontier Army's takeover of Mongolia in the autumn of 1919. Chinese rule over their former province had been challenged by Mongolian seperatists since 1911. The Chinese army garrisoning Mongolia was to face a more deadly threat to their control with the 1921 invasion by a mixed White Russian, Mongolian Army. This army was under the deranged leadership of the renegade White Russian 'Mad Baron' Ungern Sternburg.

old Berdan Russian rifles, seven artillery pieces and ten machine guns. Another 10,000 troops followed behind the advance force and were sent to garrison forts in different areas of the country. The expedition was acclaimed in some quarters and met with approval by politicians of all parties. Military rivals to Tuan were less happy about the success of the invasion and saw it as a victory for his Anhwei Clique rather than for China as a whole. Opposition to the Chinese presence in Mongolia grew when the main tribal leaders were forced to go through a humiliating ceremony in 1920 recognizing China's rule. Generals in Peking put pressure on President Hsu Shih-ch'ang nicknamed 'Big Hsu' to dismiss General Hsu Shu-cheng 'Little Hsu' (not related to the president). Hsu Shu-cheng then moved the main body of his army back into China in order to confront his enemies. He left behind only a token force which, although enough to keep the peace amongst the Mongolians, was about to be faced by a much greater menace.

In October 1921 a renegade army of Chinese bandits, Mongols, Tibetans and White Russians invaded Mongolia. This army was commanded by Baron Roman Ungern von Sternberg, a former officer in the Imperial Russian Cossacks. He had been fighting the Bolshevik troops with his White Russian cavalry since the start of the Russian Civil War. Now with the Communists on the verge of victory, he decided to move south from Siberia with his White Russian troops to take over Mongolia.

His wild troops rode into Northern Mongolia killing an estimated 80,000 civilians in the process and slaughtering any Chinese troops he encountered. In one incident a 6,000-strong Chinese force was defeated by Sternberg's men and about 2,000 of them were reported to have joined his expanding army. He captured the capital Urga in February 1921 and sacked the city, allowing his unruly troops to kill, rape and loot for several days. He then installed the former Mongolian ruler Bogd Khan as his 'puppet' and planned to rule the country through him with the intention to restore the Mongols to the glory they had enjoyed in the days of Ghengis Khan and his descendants. Sternberg's army varied in strength but in early 1921 it was estimated at 6,000, with 4,000 of his troops being White Russian refugees from the civil war and the others coming from various Asian countries. His army was joined by a large number of Mongolians during his campaign and he received support from the most unlikely of sources – the Dalai Lama sent him 70 of his finest mounted Tibetan warriors as part of a misplaced support for Mongolia which had been agreed in a historic pact. Sternberg also had a small force of Japanese with his army, including 70 artillerymen and a bodyguard of 40 men. Japanese material support for his cause meant that most of his front-line troops were armed with modern Arisaka rifles. Eyewitnesses described the exotic uniforms of his rag-tag army,

> Ungern's own men in long blue coats, Mongols and Tibetans in red coats with epaulets bearing the swastika of Ghenghis Khan and the initials of the living Buddha, the Japanese in yellow-khaki and columns of raggedy White officers with pieces of leather tied to the soles of their feet.[6]

Although he had defeated the Chinese troops in Mongolia he now had to contend with new enemies – the emerging Mongolian Communists under their military leader, Damdin Sukhbaatar, and the Soviet Army which supported them. With the help of Soviet aircraft, artillery and troops, Damdin Sukhbaatar and his men defeated Sternberg's undisciplined rabble by August 1922, ending his dreams of a Pan-Mongolian Empire. The baron was soon after betrayed by his own men and was put in front of a Soviet firing squad. The victory of the Mongolian Communists and the retreat of any surviving Chinese troops from the country ended China's connection with Mongolia.

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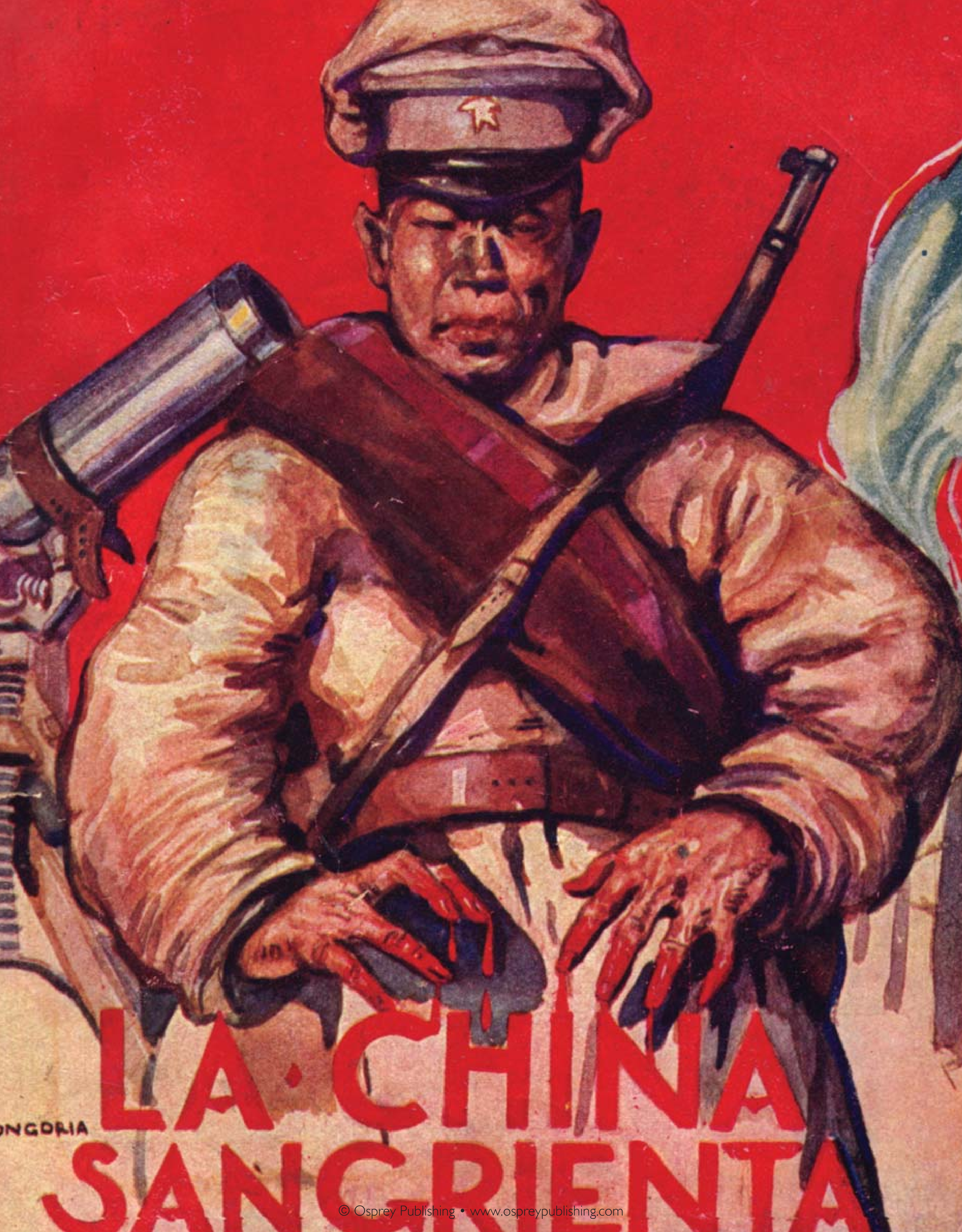
[6] Jamie Bisher, *White Terror: Cossack Warlords of the Trans-Siberian* (2005).


ONGORIA
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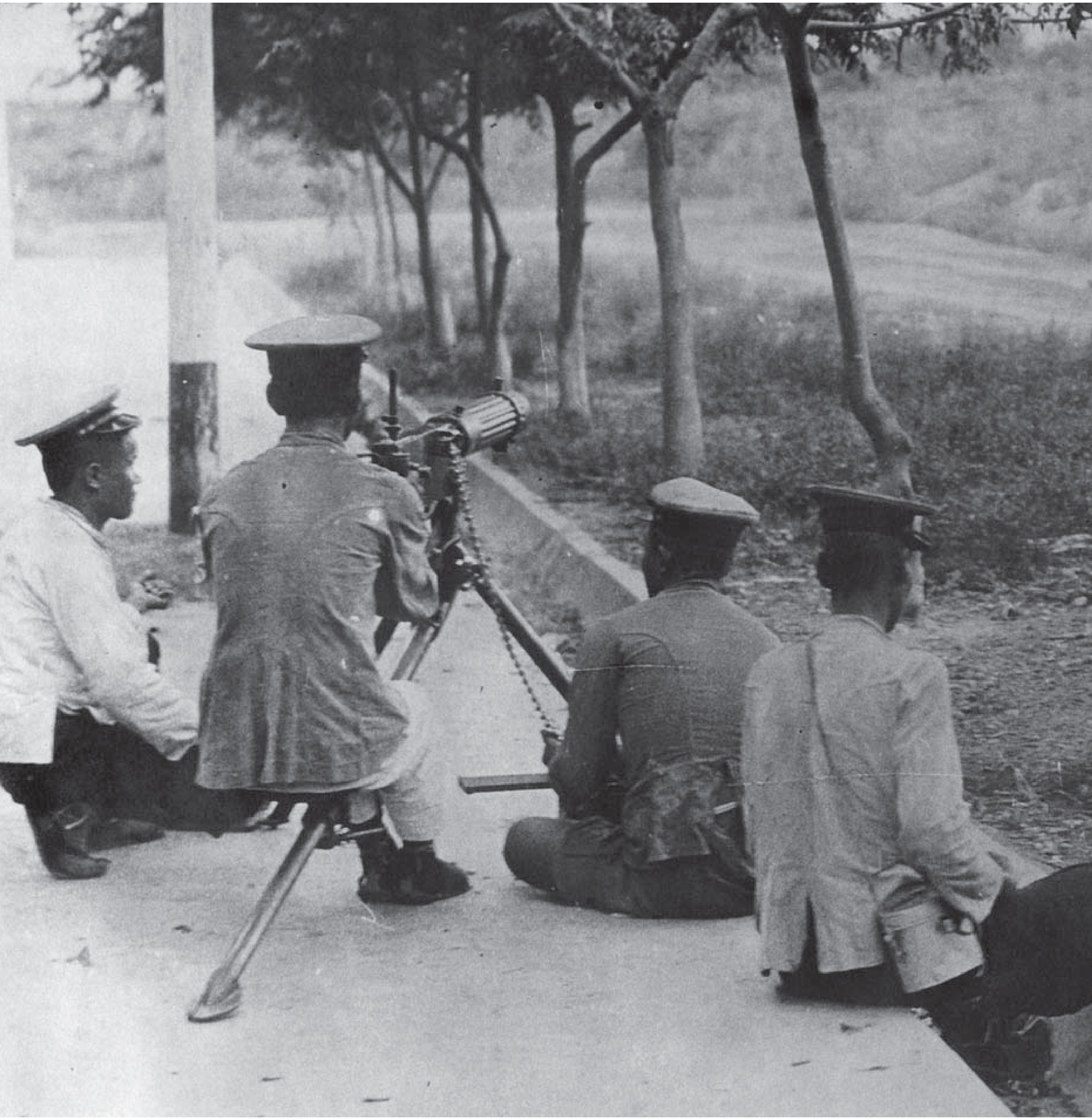
CHAPTER 3

HIGH WARLORDISM

1920–28

Although the warlord period began in earnest with the death of Yuan Shi-kai in 1916, most of its major wars were fought between 1920 and 1928. The total number of warlords in China in the years between 1916 and 1928 was estimated at between 1,300 and 2,000. Their armies fought a staggering 500 wars during the 1910s and 1920s including five to six major conflicts. Wars fought between the warlords varied in size from local disputes with just a few hundred men in each army to large conflicts with hundreds of thousands of men involved. During the warlord period the number of armed men in China grew year on year as each commander looked constantly to increase the size of his army. In 1916 there were an

Opposite page
The stylish cover of a Spanish book from 1928 entitled *Bloody China* illustrates well how the European nations saw the fighting in China during the 1920s. China was seen as an unruly and chaotic country where central government had no control and the military commanders or 'warlords' held sway. Blood dripping from the soldier's hands symbolizes the suffering of the ordinary Chinese people under the rule of the 'blood thirsty' soldiers.



Opposite page
This Vickers heavy machine-gun crew are guarding an outpost in the summer of 1920 at the time of the Anhwei–Chihli War. Although the caption does not state which particular army these men belong to they would wear coloured armbands to distinguish themselves in battle. The Anhwei Army received most of its arms from Japan and the Chihli Army got most of its from Italian suppliers.

estimated 500,000 men under arms in China; this figure had grown by 200,000 just a year later. By 1919 there was a total of one million men in the various armies with 304,000 soldiers in the southern provinces and 536,000 in the north. Armies under the political control of Sun Yat-sen were said to number 130,000 but few of these troops had any real loyalty to him. Amongst the troops who were supposedly loyal to Sun included 70,000 men in Yunnan province and 42,000 in Kwangsi province. In the north the main warlord clique in 1919 was the Anhwei which had 212,000 men in its main armies. Another 20,000 men were loyal to the Anhwei-backed president Feng Kuo-chang. The 304,000 other troops in the north had no real loyalty to the Anhwei Clique and were described as being politically neutral.

After the defeat of the Anhwei armies in the 1920 Anhwei–Chihli War most of their former troops were distributed between the victorious armies. When the first war between two new powerful cliques – the Fengtien and the Chihli – began in 1922, there were 1,200,000 men under arms. This figure rose during 1923–24 to 1,500,000 men, and after the end of the 1924 second Chihli–Fengtien War had fallen to 1,450,000. The start of the Northern Expedition in 1926 saw an increase in troop numbers as the various factions prepared for the coming fighting. In 1926 there were approximately 1,600,000 men in the warlord armies and by the time the Northern Expedition ended in 1928 another 400,000 men had been recruited.

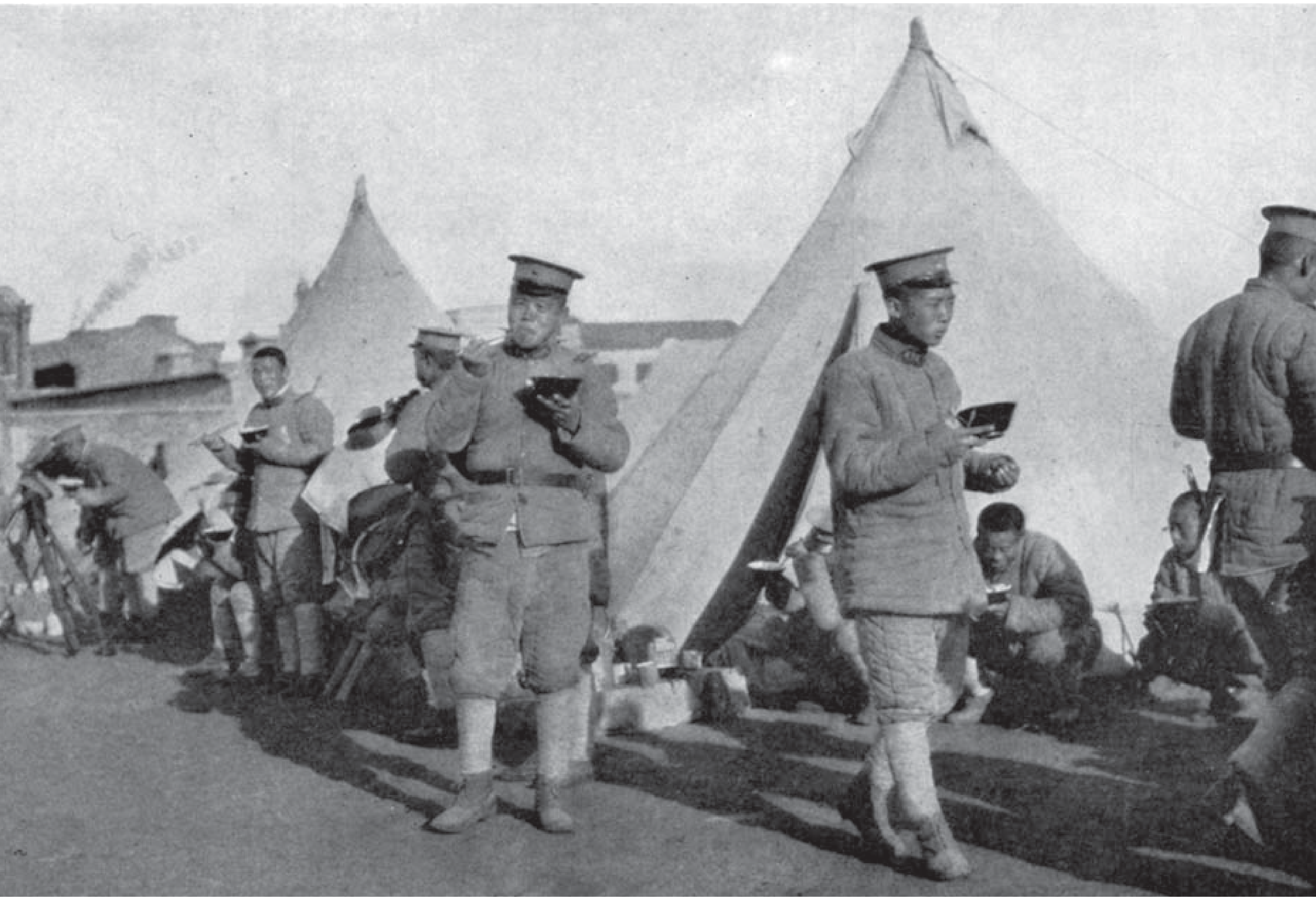
THE MAJOR WARLORD ARMIES 1920–28

The Chihli and Anhwei cliques were born out of a schism within the leadership of the Beiyang Army. The Anhwei Clique Army, which from 1920 was known as the 'National Stabilization Army', was made up of five divisions and four combined brigades with Marshal Tuan Ch'i-jui as its commander in chief. Tuan's army had benefited greatly from Japanese training and military supplies after 1916 when it was expected that his 'War Participation Army' would be sent to fight on the Western Front on the side of the Allies. Japanese instructors were sent to China to train his forces, but the end of the First World War meant that it was never sent to France. The training and the supply of good weaponry and equipment made the Anhwei Clique Army the most impressive in China. Its 'North-west Frontier Guard' or 'Frontier Defence Army' with four mixed brigades was the best formation within the army and was commanded by General Hsu Shu-cheng or 'Little Hsu'. From 1916 until its defeat in July 1920 in the Anhwei–Chihli War, the Anhwei Clique Army dominated Chinese military affairs.

The original and by far the best unit of the Chihli Clique Army was the 3rd Division, originally formed in 1904. It became the personal division of Ts'ao K'un in 1912, and then of Wu Pei-fu in 1918. From 1916 until 1918 the Chihli Army expanded rapidly, increasing in size by 300 per cent and from 1920, when Wu Pei-fu gained the leadership of the army, it also had the most experienced field commander in China. Although its best divisions – including the 14th, 24th and the 3rd – were fine formations, the rest of the army was diluted by absorbing eight divisions and three mixed brigades from the defeated Anhwei Army in 1920. In 1922, when it was victorious in the first Chihli–Fengtien War, its expansion by four divisions of ex-Fengtien troops again reduced its esprit de corps.

By 1924 the Chihli Clique Army had grown to 250,000 men, but its fighting potential was limited by a shortage of heavy weaponry including artillery. Wu Pei-fu never had access to the same amount of imported armaments as some of his more affluent rivals, like Chang Tso-lin. When the Chihli Army was defeated in the Second Chihli–Fengtien War in 1924, Wu and the remnants of his army had to retreat to his own base in Hunan province. When he faced the advance of the Northern Expedition in 1926, his personal army had been reduced to about 80,000 men.

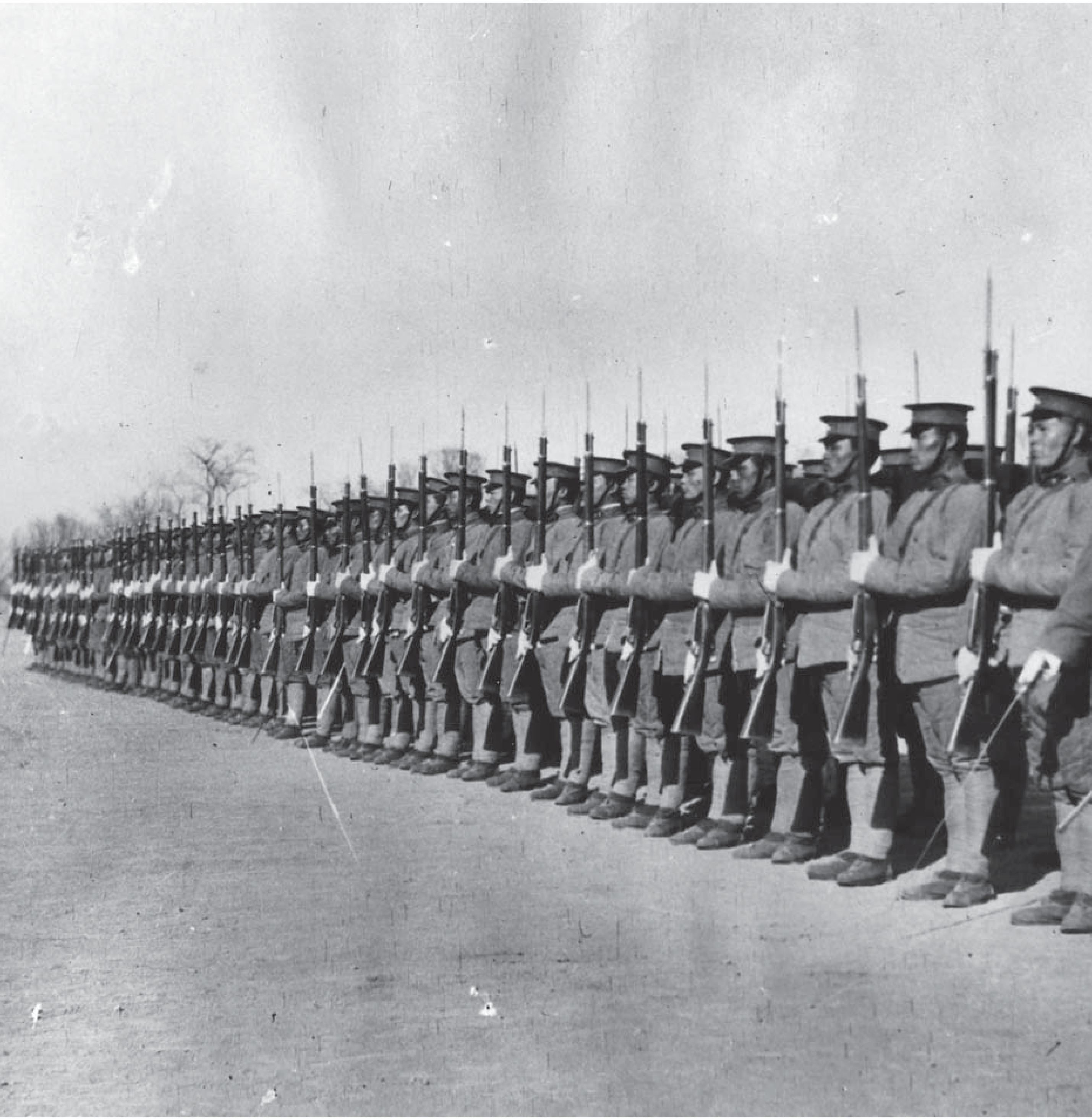
Marshal Chang Tso-lin and his powerful Fengtien Clique Army were a major force in Chinese warfare from 1918 until 1928. Based in the three Manchurian provinces of Kirin, Fengtien and Heilungkiang, the Fengtien Army extended its control to include most of northern China during this period. Chang – a former bandit leader – had built his army up during the late 1910s and early 1920s; by 1918 he was in command of an army of 50,000 men. At that time he was not officially the head of the Fengtien Clique but had the title of inspector general. During the Anhwei–Chihli War of 1920 his army of 70,000 was in alliance with the Chihli Army. Although the Fengtien Army did not do much fighting in 1920 they were able to take most of the captured weaponry from the Anhwei Army. This allowed for a rapid expansion of Chang's army and gave him the confidence to go to war against Wu Pei-fu and his Chihli Army in 1922. His surprise defeat in the First Chihli–Fengtien War made Chang Tso-lin reassess his forces, and a major training, re-equipping and reorganization



Soldiers eat their rice ration outside their tents during the 1920 fighting between the Anhwei and Chihli armies. As in most warlord conflicts, both sides wore the same grey cotton wadded uniforms with peaked caps. During the war the Chihli Army wore plain blue armbands to distinguish themselves from their Anhwei enemy.

phase followed. In 1924, when he faced Wu in battle again, his 250,000-strong army was equipped with modern artillery and was supported by a substantial air force. His victory over Wu in the Second Chihli–Fengtien War made him the most powerful warlord in China but this was challenged in 1925–26 by Feng Yu-hsiang. After defeating Feng in 1926 Chang's Fengtien Army was almost immediately faced by the Northern Expedition led by Chiang Kai-shek, a former close associate of Sun Yat-sen who would now attempt to unite the country with himself as the nominal leader.

In 1926 Chang Tso-lin formed a unified Northern Army known as the Ankuochun in response to the threat of the advancing National Revolutionary Army (NRA) which was attempting to eradicate the



These smartly turned-out soldiers of Wu Pei-fu's Chihli Army are on parade in 1923, the year after they defeated the Fengtien Army of Chang Tso-lin. Some critics said that Wu was too obsessed with parade-ground drill and not enough with the practical training of his troops. His better units, like the elite 3rd Division, were regarded in the early 1920s as having some of the best troops in China.

warlords threat. His Fengtien Army retained its separate identity under the Ankuochun, and Chang continued to try to increase its fighting capacity. The Fengtien Clique Army had some of the best artillery amongst the northern warlords and in 1927 was estimated to have eight regiments of guns. A US intelligence report estimated that Chang had seven regiments of 77mm field guns – a total of 420 – and one regiment of 24 150mm heavy guns. Although Chang's troops were defeated by the National Revolutionary Army in several battles, he still had a strong army of 220,000 in 1928.

In addition to the Fengtien Army, most of the remainder of the Ankuochun Army was made up of the forces of two major warlords. The first warlord was General Sun Ch'uan-fang, 'The Nanking Warlord', a former Chihli Army commander who allied his troops with the Ankuochun Army in 1926. In order to fight the NRA he gathered all his divisions from his garrison forces into one central army. This plan backfired when two divisions went over to Chiang Kai-shek's NRA. By 1927 he had about 200,000 men under his command, spread out to protect the five provinces under his control. When he tried to defend the two cities of Shanghai and Nanking, he had 70,000 poorly armed troops under his command. This army was hastily put together by Sun and was roughly organized into 11 divisions and six mixed brigades with whole units armed only with spears due to a shortage of rifles! His defeat by the NRA at the battle of Lung-t'an cost him 30,000 men, 35,000 precious rifles and 30 field guns. This battle – at which ten of his high ranking officers surrendered – finished his military career, although he was able to rejoin the Ankuochun with about 10,000 survivors.

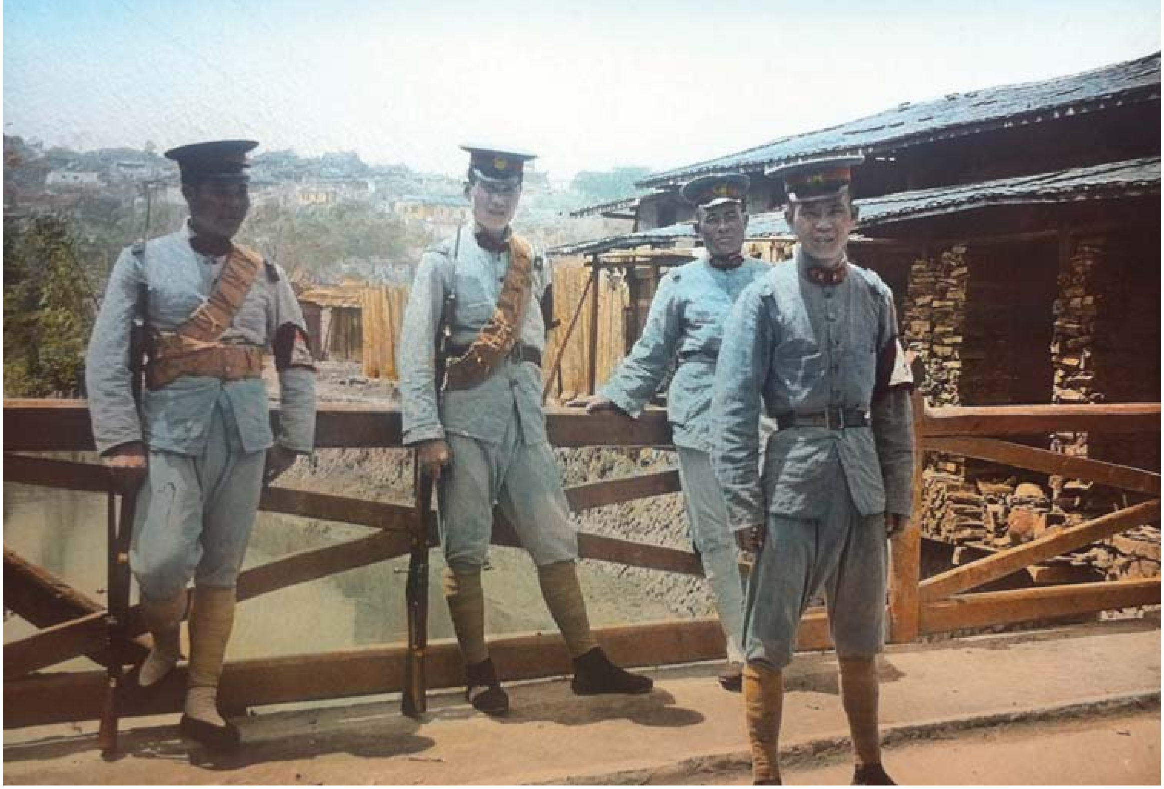
The other major warlord whose forces joined the Ankuochun in 1926 was Marshal Chang Tsung-ch'ang. His army came mostly from Shantung province. It was expanded in 1924 through the addition of

Marshal Wu Pei-fu, the commander in chief of the Chihli Clique Army, was one of the more capable warlord generals. He led his army to victory in two major wars in 1920 and 1922 before facing a heavy defeat against the Fengtien Clique in 1924. He expanded his army by recruiting defeated enemy troops, which led to a decline in the morale of his army and to its defeat in 1924 and 1926 against the Northern Expedition.

defeated Chihli troops and by 1927 it had reached a strength of 150,000 men, with 165 artillery pieces. Chang Tsung-ch'ang was a brutal man who ruled his troops by fear, rewarding those who fought well and beheading those who showed fear in battle. He had a love of exotic units and was the main employer of White Russians with over 4,000 in his army (see below). Another of his less conventional units was a 2,000-strong boys' brigade which was led by one of his sons. Recruits had an average age of ten, and they were reported to have been issued with specially shortened rifles from Chang's arsenal.

The other major warlord army during the 1920–28 period was the Kuominchun or 'National People's Army' led by the 'Christian warlord' Feng Yu-hsiang. His nickname was derived from the fact that he had converted to the Christian Baptist church in his youth. The Kuominchun began life as the 11th Division of the Chihli Army with Feng as its commanding officer. Feng and his troops were largely responsible for the defeat of the Fengtien Army in the first Chihli–Fengtien War. After betraying his commander Wu Pei-fu during the 1924 conflict with the Fengtien Army, he renamed his army as the Kuominchun. In 1922 he had commanded 20,000 men, but by 1924 he had 35,000 which was increased to 60,000 men through the recruitment of former Chihli soldiers. By 1925, when he took over the provinces of Suiyuan and Chahar, he had about 100,000 men.

Feng's army was initially well trained and well disciplined. Training including bible studies, and his men worked in factories in their barracks to earn extra pay. In common with many other warlords, the shortage of armaments stopped him expanding his army further but from 1925 he began to receive Soviet arms. He also received Soviet instructors as the Russians hoped to convince him to unite his army with the National Revolutionary Army as a means of bringing China under a unified command. Although Feng received 15,000 rifles from the Soviet Union in

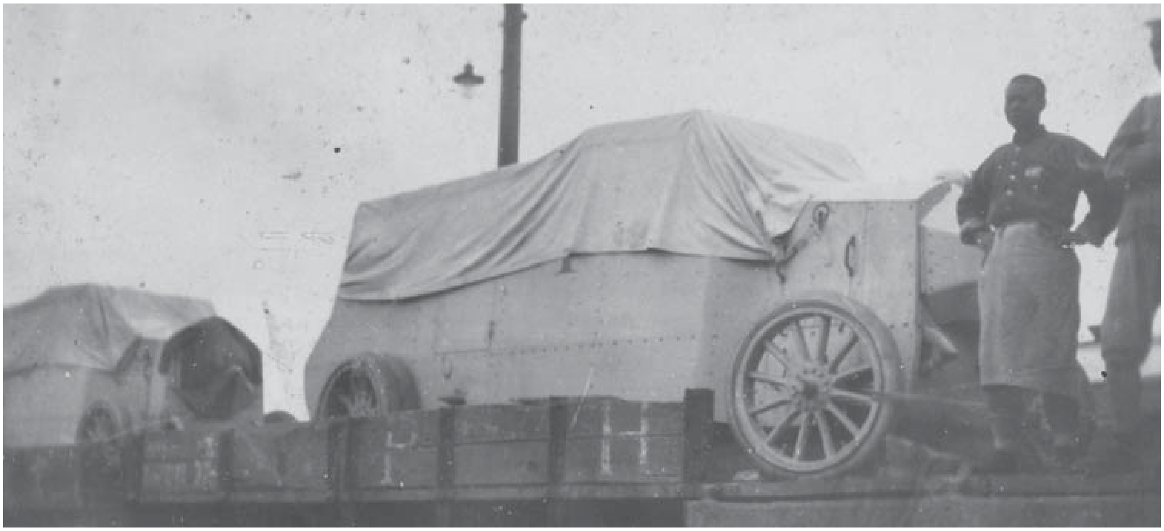


The men of this early 1920s infantry patrol all wear the distinctive red hat-bands of the well-trained Yunnan Army. The men also wear armbands on their sleeves, which were the usual way to distinguish between two armies wearing the same grey cotton uniforms. In these soldiers' cases the bands are red with a white triangle of cloth sewn on to them.

1925, heavier weaponry was not supplied as it was too difficult to get them to him via the supply route across the Gobi desert. Feng was defeated by Chang Tso-lin in 1925–26, after which he began considering offers from Chiang Kai-shek to join the NRA. In the spring of 1927 he took his better troops of the 1st Kuominchun to join in the Northern Expedition.

Warlord armies were commanded by men who could often only retain command of their troops by the strength of their character. The personal traits of the prominent warlords were often exaggerated by the fascinated Western press. Wu Pei-fu – whose nicknames included the 'scholar warlord, the 'Confucian warlord' and the 'philosopher general' – liked to study calligraphy and the works of Confucius in his leisure time. However his rather gentle image did not stop him beheading officers on the battlefield as an example to others. Other warlords earned their reputations through their actions, and one of the basest and most brutal of all was the Shantung warlord Chang Tsung-ch'ang. Chang – known as the 'dogmeat general' amongst other less complimentary names – was an unabashed monster who ruled his men by fear. He travelled with an 'international' harem of concubines who came from countries including Korea, Japan, China, Russia and even the USA. He was described as having 'the physique of an elephant, the brain of a pig and the temperament of a tiger'. His favourite way of dealing with troublemakers was to have their heads split open by swordsmen wielding huge executioner's swords. Some warlords lived on their own personal armoured trains while on campaign, and often took their wives and concubines with them. Feng Yu-hsiang, the so-called 'Christian warlord' liked to be entertained while he travelled from battle to battle and kept a piano and a White Russian pianist on his train. Whenever he was in the vicinity of Tientsin he would get his favourite piano tuner to come out and tune the piano for him!

Despite their often humble beginnings, or perhaps because of them, many warlords became renowned for their extravagance. While Chang Tso-lin, the 'Manchurian Warlord', was said to own the biggest pearl in the world, his rival Wu Pei-fu was reported to have one of the world's largest diamonds. Chang was known to be a great gambler, and it was claimed he lost $1 million in one particular card game. One Shantung general, despite a reputation for extreme brutality, liked to entertain his guests at dinner and had meals served up on a 40-piece Belgian cut-glass dinner service. Some of the more loathsome warlords came from the more remote provinces, in the west and south-west of China. General Yang Sen 'Rat Face' was one of the most prominent of the many Szechwanese warlords with an army of 60,000 men. Like most warlords he paid little heed to the feelings of the people under his control and on one occasion decided to make more room in his crowded capital, Chengtu. In order that the handful of motor cars in the city could travel easily down the streets he simply demolished any buildings that stood in the way, then paved the newly widened roads so that rickshaws could move freely around the city even though this mode of transport was unknown in that part of China. The elderly General Ma Fu-hsing, originally from Yunnan province, was one of the most corrupt and brutal of the petty warlords who controlled parts of western China. He was the titular ruler of the Kashgar region and ruled over his fiefdom like a medieval lord with power of life and death over his subjects. If anyone disobeyed him they were usually fed into a hay-cutting machine which severed their limbs one by one. He then had the victims' limbs nailed to the city walls with a sign stating their crimes against his regime. Besides his cruelty he was hated for forcing the people to buy goods from businesses that he owned. Ma needed the money to keep his harem of tribal beauties and to equip his 2,000-strong Muslim

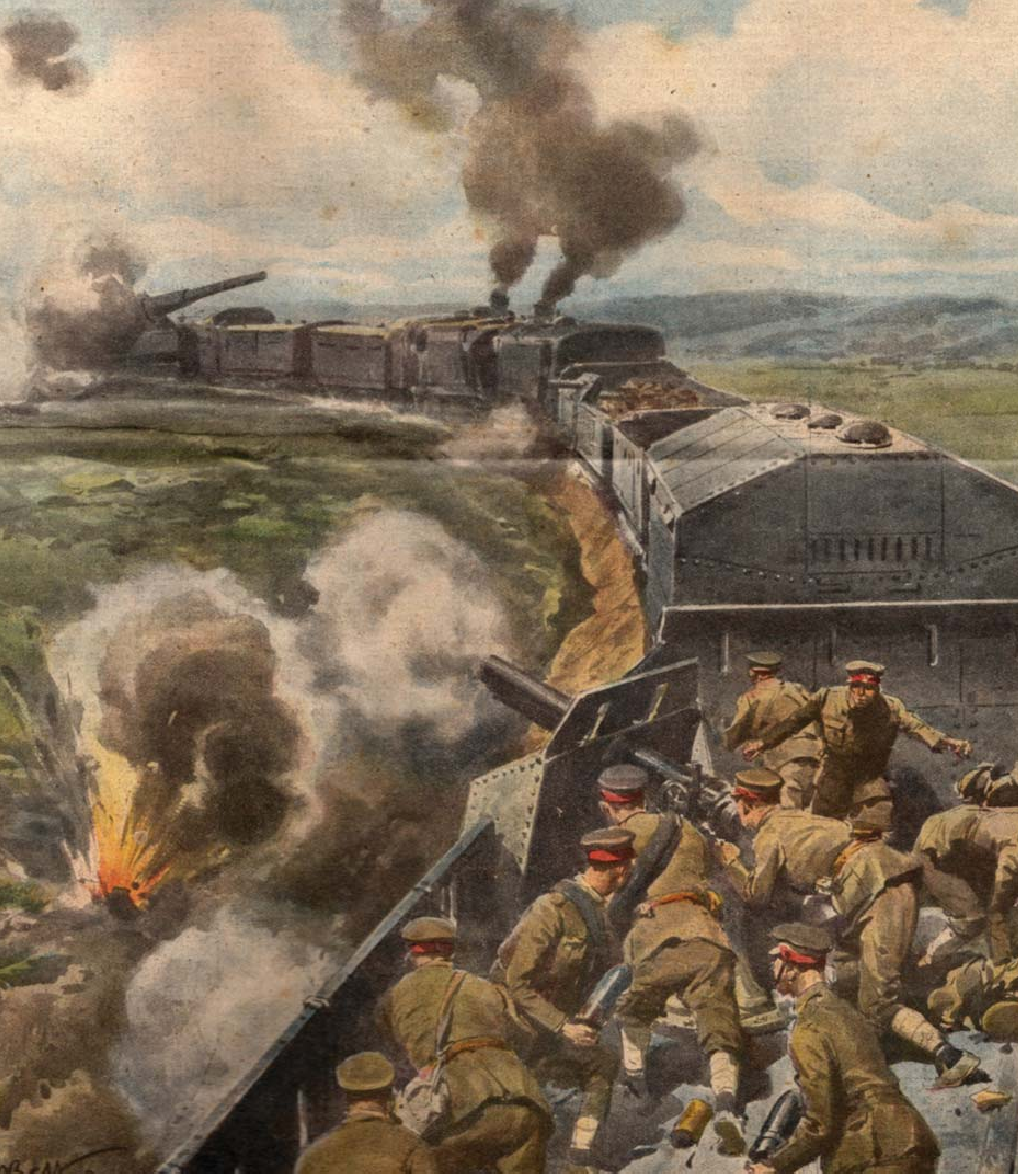


Unidentified armoured cars of Wu Pei-fu's Chihli Army being transported to the front by train during the 1924 Chihli–Fengtien War. Although Wu had a number of armoured vehicles he was reluctant to send them into battle against the Fengtien Army. Warlords would often hold their better weapons in reserve so as not to risk losing them to the enemy.

Army. When his excesses finally proved too much, his superior General Yang Tseng-hsin, the governor of Sinkiang province sent his replacement to Kashgar. The replacement had orders to shoot Ma, which he did before putting his corpse on display for the happy populace to view.

Warlord Armaments

During the warlord period, just about every model of revolver, rifle and sub-machine gun available on the world arms market found its way into China. Pistols included the Belgian FN Model 1900 and 1910, the Spanish Astra M1921 and the German Mauser M1910 automatics. By far the most popular type of side arm in service in China during the period was the Mauser C-96 'Broomhandle' pistol which was bought in huge numbers from 1922 onwards. The Bergmann MP-18/I sub-machine gun was acquired during the early 1920s from German suppliers and a small number of US Thompson M1921s were used by the southern warlords. During the warlord period one of the main rifles in use was the Mauser, which were bought in M1871, M1895, M1904, M1907 and M1913 models. Russian Mosin-Nagant M1891s were used by several warlords, including Feng Yu-hsiang, and by the National Revolutionary Army. Japanese Arisaka 6.5mm rifles were imported by the Chinese and many were also sold to the Fengtien Army of Chang Tso-lin. Feng also received a number of US-made Winchester M1895 rifles when he had expected the more popular Mosin-Nagant. Other types of rifle seen in China in the 1920s were the British Lee-Enfield .303 and the Italian



Armoured Trains in China 1920–28

Armoured trains were widely used during the warlord period and played a decisive role, especially during the Northern Expedition. Both the northern warlords and the National Revolutionary Army employed them during the fighting in 1926–28. Some primitive armoured trains had been used by warlords from 1920 during fighting along the Peking–Hankow Railway. These were simply goods trains with a couple of the freight trucks fitted with thin metal plate and armed with a field gun and emplaced machine guns. In 1922 some more advanced armoured trains were brought into China by White Russian mercenaries. After their defeat by the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War they now offered their trains and themselves as crews to Chang Tso-lin. The trains were ideal weapons to use on the railways that ran across the northern Chinese plains where Chang's armies were based. He commissioned the building of several new armoured trains in railway workshops under the supervision of the White Russian experts. Other warlords followed suit and the most powerful of them – or the ones with the most money in their war chests – soon had several armoured trains. The armoured train became a mobile headquarters for some warlords and a means of escape from the battlefield if things went against them. Major warlords might include in their trains special carriages which provided accommodation for himself and his staff. By the mid-1920s armoured trains were used by the Kiangsu warlord General Ch'i Hsieh-yuan and by his rival, the Kiangsu General Lu Yung-hsiang. Both Wu Pei-fu and Sun Ch'uan Fang had their own personal armoured trains. Wu Pei-fu was reported to have captured several other armoured trains but was not particularly interested in using them in battle. Instead he used them to protect his troop trains when moving his army around his domains in central China.

Chang Tsung-ch'ang had the most armoured trains and paid Russian specialists to design him three in the railway yards of Shantung province. His armoured trains were the ultimate weapons of war in China at the time, with gun trucks employing revolving turrets mounting 75mm field guns and numerous machine guns. His first three trains were the *Hupei*, the *Great Wall* and the *Yangtze River*, which fought together like a rail-bound fleet. The next four were built at the Tsinan Railway yard and had armoured wagons with rotating turrets armed with field guns and had a total of six guns and 24 machine guns as armament. These trains were used in battles with the Nanking warlord Sun Ch'uan-funin the autumn of 1925. In early 1926 yet another four trains were built for Chang. These had an additional field gun, two mortars and 24 Maxim machine guns. In the spring of 1927 Chang's newest trains were used in fighting against the Kuominchun Army, but two were destroyed and the other two were damaged. Not to be outdone he ordered two replacement trains to be built, this time in a Chihli railway factory. It was these new trains that formed part of a six-strong force which fought the National Revolutionary Army in 1927 and 1928. During the fighting several of Chang's trains were captured and their White Russian crews were immediately shot as was the custom.

The standard way to counter an armoured train was to tear up the railway tracks in front and behind it leaving it stranded. This tactic was used on several occasions by rival train crews who would sabotage a selected length of track used by the enemy train. They then made sure that their train's guns were zeroed in at the length of track where the rival train was stuck. Eventually the National Revolutionary Army had captured enough trains to counter those of the northern warlords effectively. The defeat of the northern armies' armoured trains in 1928 had a devastating effect on their war effort. Northern commanders like Chang Tsung-ch'ang had relied too heavily on them and their White Russian crews to spearhead attacks and their demise led to a loss of morale.

Opposite page
An illustration from the cover of a 1927 Italian news magazine shows the battle between two rival armoured trains in China. The armoured trains would try and put the enemy train out of action before sending some of their crew to capture it. There was a particularly bitter rivalry between the White Russian-crewed trains and those of the National Revolutionary Army. Some trains changed hands on several occasions with the defeated crew members usually being executed by the victors.

The baggage train of a warlord army enters a captured town in the disorderly manner which epitomizes the way 1920s armies were organized. The soldiers' kits and bundles of clothing are piled on the carts as well as bugles and boxes of ammunition. When on campaign warlord armies requisitioned peasant carts and their owners to transport their belongings.

Mannlicher-Carcano 6.5mm M1891 rifle, which was used by the Chihli Clique Army. However the most common type in Chinese service from the 1890s until 1937 was the Model 1888 7.92mm Gewehr Commission rifle. This rifle was first bought by the Chinese Imperial Army in 1891–92, when it was the best rifle available on the world market. Almost immediately the Chinese arsenals at Hanyang and Canton began producing exact copies of the Gewehr 88. Large-scale production of the Gewehr 88 continued in its original pattern in China, but in 1906 a modification of it began to be produced in the Hanyang arsenal.

During the warlord period the main types of light machine gun used were the Danish Madsen 7.92mm M1916 and a few examples

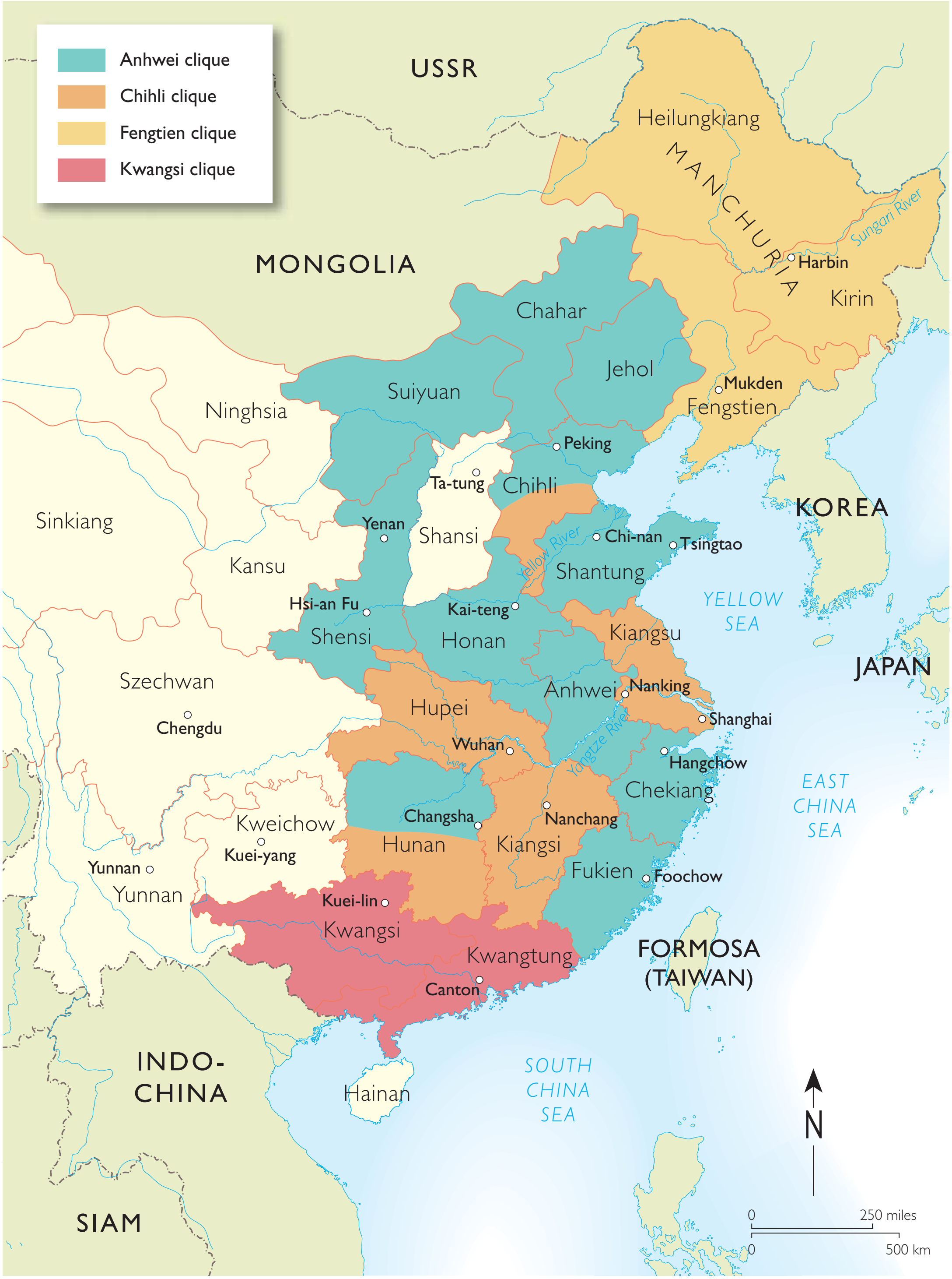
廠工鐵聚德
TE CHU IRON WORKS

of the French Hotchkiss M1922. The Chinese also imported the so-called 'Rexer' machine gun in large number, which was a British-licensed version of the Madsen. Medium and heavy machine guns included the French Hotchkiss M1914, and Russian Maxim M1910 machine guns. The Russian Maxims came from several sources; some were bought from defeated White Russians in Siberia in 1922, others were supplied to Feng Yu-hsiang in 1925–26 by the Soviet Union. Other types in service during the warlord era were the German Mauser 7.92mm DWM M1909 and Bergman 7.92mm M1910 heavy machine guns. The Colt-Browning M1919 heavy machine gun was imported in small numbers and then was copied from 1921 at various Chinese arsenals including at Hanyang and Shanghai. Japanese machine guns were used by Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien Army as he received large arms shipments from Japan in the 1920s. These included the 6.5mm Taisho 11 light machine gun and the Type 3 medium machine gun. Most arms shipments to the various warlord armies in the 1920s included a few machine guns, which could be of any type. Types listed amongst the arms shipments were the US Colt-95 medium machine gun, the French St Etienne Mle 1907 and the Hotchkiss M1914 medium machine guns. Italian arms were sold to several warlords, including the Mitraglice Fiat 14 heavy machine gun. By 1923 it was estimated that there were 1,394 machine guns in service with the various Chinese armies. This fairly low figure increased year on year as the rival armies prepared for the wars of 1924–28. The shortage of machine guns in warlord armies may be explained by the fact that they cost the warlords on average $450 each, while a rifle in comparison only cost $17.

Artillery during the warlord period was always in short supply, with even the bigger armies having only a few hundred field guns at most. To try and remedy this shortage most armies used large numbers of trench mortars, which were relatively cheap and easily manufactured. They were also easy to operate and move around the battlefield, which was a bonus when there were often no horses available to pull bigger guns. Mortars came in a variety of calibres, from 47mm up to large 200mm models, although 75mm calibre was the most common. Chang Tso-lin opened his own mortar factory at Mukden, which was run by Englishman Donald 'One Arm' Sutton. Sutton had bought the rights to the British Stokes trench mortar for the Far East and had peddled it around various warlords before Chang agreed to manufacture it. The 75mm or 3-inch mortar was made in large numbers and was – as Sutton claimed – largely responsible for Chang's victory over Wu Pei-fu in 1924. Other warlords began to manufacture mortars in their own arsenals but none reached the capacity of the Mukden factory.

Heavier artillery in warlord armies were limited mainly to the light mountain guns which had been bought by the Imperial Army before 1911. Mountain guns were mainly Krupp 75mm models, with many warlords only having one or two batteries in their army. Any captured artillery pieces were usually repaired in the workshops that most warlords had at their headquarters or in their own small arsenal. Only the most powerful warlords had larger guns and there were only a handful of heavy howitzers in China during the warlord period. These were mainly with the Fengtien Army of Chang Tso-lin, who had not only the funds to buy them from abroad but almost as importantly, the draught animals to pull them. Mountain guns were easier to move around and only required one or two ponies or mules to pull them. Through necessity southern armies were often well-trained in the breaking down of mountain guns for transportation. Smaller numbers of field guns were used by all armies including various 75mm Krupp-made pieces, and Chang Tso-lin had a number of French artillery pieces including 75mm M1896s. He also had larger guns including the British-made 6-inch 26cwt howitzer and the Austro-Hungarian 104mm M14 howitzer. Chang had also acquired a few batteries of old 76.2mm M00 field guns from the White Russians and Czech Legion in 1922. Two types of Austro-Hungarian 75mm guns were in use with Chinese armies, the M14 mountain gun and the M11 field gun. Anti-aircraft artillery was employed by several warlords with Wu Pei-fu having at least two different models in service. He had several modern Italian 76mm 76/40 guns which were mounted on the backs of trucks. By 1918 the total number of artillery pieces according to a Japanese source

MAIN WARLORD CLIQUES BEFORE THE ANHWEI-CHIHLI WAR 1920


Anhwei clique
Chihli clique
Fengtien clique
Kwangsi clique
USSR
MONGOLIA
Heilungkiang
MANCHURIA
Sungari River
Harbin
Kirin
Chahar
Jehol
Mukden
Fengstien
Suiyuan
Ninghsia
Peking
Ta-tung
Chihli
KOREA
Sinkiang
Yenan
Shansi
Yellow River
Chi-nan
Tsingtao
Shantung
Kansu
YELLOW SEA
Hsi-an Fu
Kai-teng
Shensi
Honan
Kiangsu
JAPAN
Szechwan
Anhwei
Nanking
Chengdu
Hupei
Shanghai
Wuhan
Yangtze River
Hangchow
Chekiang
EAST CHINA SEA
Kweichow
Changsha
Nanchang
Kuei-yang
Hunan
Kiangsi
Yunnan
Fukien
Foochow
Yunnan
Kuei-lin
Kwangsi
FORMOSA (TAIWAN)
Kwangtung
Canton
INDO-CHINA
Hainan
SOUTH CHINA SEA
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SIAM
0
250 miles
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500 km

Marshal Chang Tso-lin, 'the Manchurian warlord', an ex-bandit who rose to command the Fengtien Army and became the most powerful in warlord China. He controlled Manchuria from 1918 and dominated northern China during the 1920s. His 350,000-strong army had tanks, artillery and a large modern air force and received support from Japan until his defeat during the Northern Expedition. Once defeated he was no longer of use to the Japanese and they decided to assassinate him by blowing up his train in 1928.

was 1,480 of small and medium types and only 46 heavier guns.

Only a few armoured vehicles were in service with the warlord armies and those that did have them usually had them made in their own workshops, built on truck chassis and covered in metal plate which often came from dismantled steam engines. Some of these were well made in specially commissioned workshops or in railway yards and had turrets fitted and were often armed with light cannon or machine guns. Once one warlord acquired a few armoured cars his rivals would try to acquire some so that their troops would not be intimidated by the enemy vehicles. Very few armoured vehicles were imported into China although Chang Tso-lin did have a number of French FT-17 light tanks. Wu Pei-fu, his rival, imported several types of armoured car including at least six French-made Citreon-Kigresse half-track vehicles with 37mm guns fitted. Wu, however, did not have the trained crews to operate any type of his armoured cars during the 1924 war and did not want to lose them in battle. The National Revolutionary Army had a small number of improvised armoured cars built on truck chassis. These were used during the latter stages of the Northern Expedition in 1928 along with several captured armoured cars and former Fengtien FT-17 tanks.

THE ANHWEI–CHIHLI WAR

Fought over a few days in July 1920, this conflict was the culmination of several years of hostility between rival warlord cliques. The Anhwei Clique had dominated northern China in the four years since Yuan Shi-kai's death. In 1920 the Anhwei Clique controlled most of north-western and central China, including the provinces of Fukien, Chekiang, Anhwei, Shensi and Shansi. It also controlled the outlying provinces of Jehol, Chahar and Suiyuan, which were known collectively as the 'Special

Administrative Areas'. Anhwei's control of parts of northern China was seen as a threat to the power of the Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin. He controlled the three provinces which comprised Manchuria and wanted to expand into northern China. In preparation for war, Chang began to form alliances with any military governors not under the control of the Anhwei Clique. His main ally in the forthcoming war would be Ts'ao K'un, the head of the Chihli Clique, which controlled Kiangsu, Kiangsi, Hupei, Honan and the southern part of Chihli province. Tuan Ch'i-jui, the ambitious head of the Anhwei Clique wanted to emphasise his dominance over the other warlord cliques. He was supremely confident and predicted that he would win any conflict with the Chihli and Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien Clique within 100 hours. With the best-trained and best-armed troops in China he did have some reason for this confidence. His main striking force was the North-western Frontier Army, which was armed with the best Japanese-supplied weapons, and had trained together in formations for two years. Chang Tso-lin, the Fengtien leader, had mobilized the majority of the Chihli–Fengtien force but it was the Chihli General Wu Pei-fu who was to do most of the fighting. His battle-hardened 3rd Division, which had been fighting in southern China, was to lead the Chihli–Fengtien attack, reinforced by a few mixed brigades of other troops.

The war began on 14 July and lasted four days. It was fought in the area around Peking and Tientsin and along the 80 miles of railway between the two cities. The Anhwei Clique troops proved to be poorly motivated and many formations gave up without a fight. Critically, other Anhwei units were kept out of the fighting by their commanders who did not want them to risk losing their precious armaments in battle! Wu Pei-fu outmanoeuvred his opponents at every turn and virtually won the war with his one division. Only the Anhwei Clique's North-western Frontier Amy put up any fight and this was short-lived. The final defeat of the Anhwei 15th Division, which was the Presidential Bodyguard, brought the war to an end. The lack of any major fighting meant that the total number of casualties was low and most Anhwei units were soon absorbed into Fengtien or Chihli formations. Tuan Ch'i-jui had to admit that he had totally underestimated his enemy and overestimated his own men. He resigned with most of his fellow Anhwei commanders on 19 July and then they all sought sanctuary in foreign embassies in Peking. The capital had been taken by Wu and his troops but Chang Tso-lin and his 70,000-strong Fengtien Army soon arrived and carried off the majority of the precious Anhwei arms and

These soldiers in their distinctive cotton sun hats belong to the army of Feng Yu-hsiang. They are marching off to do battle with the Fengtien Army of Chang Tso-lin in late 1925. The previous year Feng and Chang had plotted together to defeat Wu Pei-fu in the second Chihli–Fengtien War. When they fell out over who should hold power in northern China a bloody conflict broke out, with Chang the eventual victor.

equipment. The spoils not only included the weaponry and equipment taken from the defeated Anhwei Army but also their troops. It was common practice for victorious commanders to enrol defeated troops in their armies and both the Fengtien and Chihli armies absorbed large numbers of Anhwei soldiers. Although a few Anhwei Clique generals kept control of their provinces, this was now only with the agreement of the other rival cliques.

THE FIRST CHIHLI–FENGTIEN WAR

The loose alliance between the Chihli and Fengtien cliques during the 1920 war soon fell apart. Despite the Fengtien military leader Chang Tso-lin's best efforts, the now dominant Chihli Clique gained control of most of central and northern China. This left Chang and his Fengtien Clique with control over only the far north of China and the three Manchurian provinces. A war of words had been conducted since January 1922 by Chang Tso-lin and the Chihli General Wu Pei-fu. Both men were spoiling for a fight and Wu's denunciation of the President Liang Shi-i was designed to provoke Chang who was his ally. Angry telegrams passed backwards and forwards between the two rivals until Chang made the first moves. He moved his troops south of the Great Wall and into Chihli territory in order to open hostilities. A clash between the two cliques was now inevitable and war broke out between them in April 1922. Chang Tso-lin was confident of victory as his 109,000-strong army was better equipped than the Chihli Army having taken most of the Anhwei Army's weaponry in 1920. However Wu Pei-fu and his subordinate Feng Yu-hsiang completely outmanoeuvred the Fengtien Army.

The Fengtien Army's main force of about 84,000 men moved southwards into Chihli-controlled territory, concentrating its forces in the vicinity of Peking. The Chihli Army – with about 64,000 men – advanced towards the Fengtien Army positions apparently in preparation for a frontal attack. However, in a series of skilfully planned and executed manoeuvres, the Chihli forces outflanked the Fengtien troop concentrations. Feng Yu-hsiang won an impressive victory at Changsintien on 2 May. Feng performed a strategic retreat, then turned his men around and enveloped Chang Tso-lin's 15,000 men who turned and fled. This victory was followed two days later by Wu Pei-fu's victory near Tientsin when his 50,000 men, advancing towards Peking, encircled Chang's divisions. After 15 hours of bombardments and infantry attacks the Fengtien Army had suffered 7,000 casualties. This battle effectively ended Fengtien resistance and the defeated army left behind artillery, shells and camels loaded with supplies. Sporadic fighting continued for a few weeks but Chang gradually withdrew his remaining troops back across the wall into Manchuria. An armistice was signed on 20 June by which time the fighting had been over for a while. The war was a military disaster for Chang Tso-lin and his army was devastated with all but one of his five divisions either surrendering or suffering heavy casualties. His 1st and 6th divisions surrendered en masse to Wu Pei-fu's Chihli troops and only one brigade of his 28th Division made it back to Manchuria. Chang's 'own' 27th Division fled from the front and the only unit not affected was the 29th, and then only because its commander kept it out of the fighting. Two of Chang's 26 mixed brigades – the 6th and the 9th – also scattered and their commanders were subsequently executed. Although many of the Fengtien Army's units had suffered heavy losses, Chang's remaining units, which were not directly involved in the fighting, still constituted a large force. These units withdrew in good order and were allowed to retreat almost intact into Chang's Manchurian stronghold. Fearing a mutiny or worse still his troops joining the Chihli Army, Chang personally handed out $10 notes at the railway station where his defeated troops were leaving by train for Manchuria. Wu Pei-fu was not foolish enough to try and pursue Chang and his still-powerful army into Manchuria, which would have overextended his supply lines. He also knew that his forces were not strong enough to take on the Fengtien Army on their own territory. The Fengtien Army, however, had left most of their heavy equipment behind them, providing Wu's troops with much-needed guns and ammunition. The fighting that had taken place was more brutal than had been the norm in previous warlord conflicts and casualties numbered 30,000. Once Chang and his army were safely back in Manchuria in late June, he claimed that he had retired from Chinese politics. At the same time he declared the three provinces of Manchuria independent from the rest of China. He knew that his army had not performed as expected and that he needed time to re-group, re-arm and re-train them ready for the next confrontation with Wu. After the shock of his defeat Chang introduced a major re-organization of the Fengtien Army and he also began to negotiate with possible Allies from within the Chihli clique. He also had large quantities of new weapons imported into Manchuria between 1922 and 1924 in preparation for a final showdown with Wu Pei-fu.

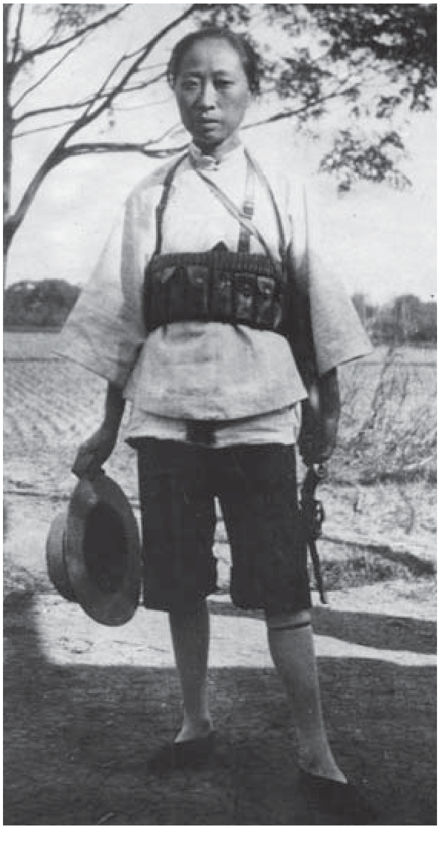
THE KIANGSU–CHEKIANG WAR

The Kiangsu–Chekiang War, which broke out in August 1924, was a local conflict between two rival warlords, General Lu Yung-hsiang of Chekiang and Chi Hsieh-yuan of Kiangsu, who were fighting over the right to control the vitally important city of Shanghai. Although Shanghai was geographically part of Chekiang province and should have come under the jurisdiction of General Lu, it had been controlled before 1924 by General Chi. Because Chi could count on the support of the Fengtien Clique and its large army it was vital that the attacking Chekiang Army took Shanghai before Chang Tso-lin could intervene. At the start of the conflict the Kiangsu Army was 60,000 strong and was made up of the 6th and 19th National divisions, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Kiangsu divisions and the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Kiangsu mixed brigades. Just before the war started the Kiangsu Army received air support from the Manchurian warlord, Chang Tso-lin, who sent 30 aircraft. Chekiang units at the commencement of the war were the 4th and 10th National divisions, the 1st and 2nd Chekiang divisions and two mixed brigades. Also available was Lu Yung-hsiang's bodyguard unit, which was equivalent to a mixed brigade. In total Lu had 74,000 troops and the support of an equivalent number of aircraft as his opponent. The fighting began in August and lasted until 15 October with estimated casualties of 13,000 men. The fighting was brutal, with artillery firing at almost point-blank range across a restricted front line. Much of the fighting was done at close quarters and neither side was taking any prisoners. The fighting ended abruptly when the Chekiang troops stopped firing. However, they had no intention of leaving the front line or of handing over their rifles to the Kiangsu troops. General Chi Hsieh-yuan decided to solve the problem in typical warlord fashion with bribes. He offered each Chekiang soldier $10 if they would leave the area but their representatives negotiated a higher rate of $20 each and in addition paid repatriation to their homes by train. Some of the Chekiang soldiers opted for the other warlord option and asked if they could join the Kiangsu Army, presumably still after taking their $10.

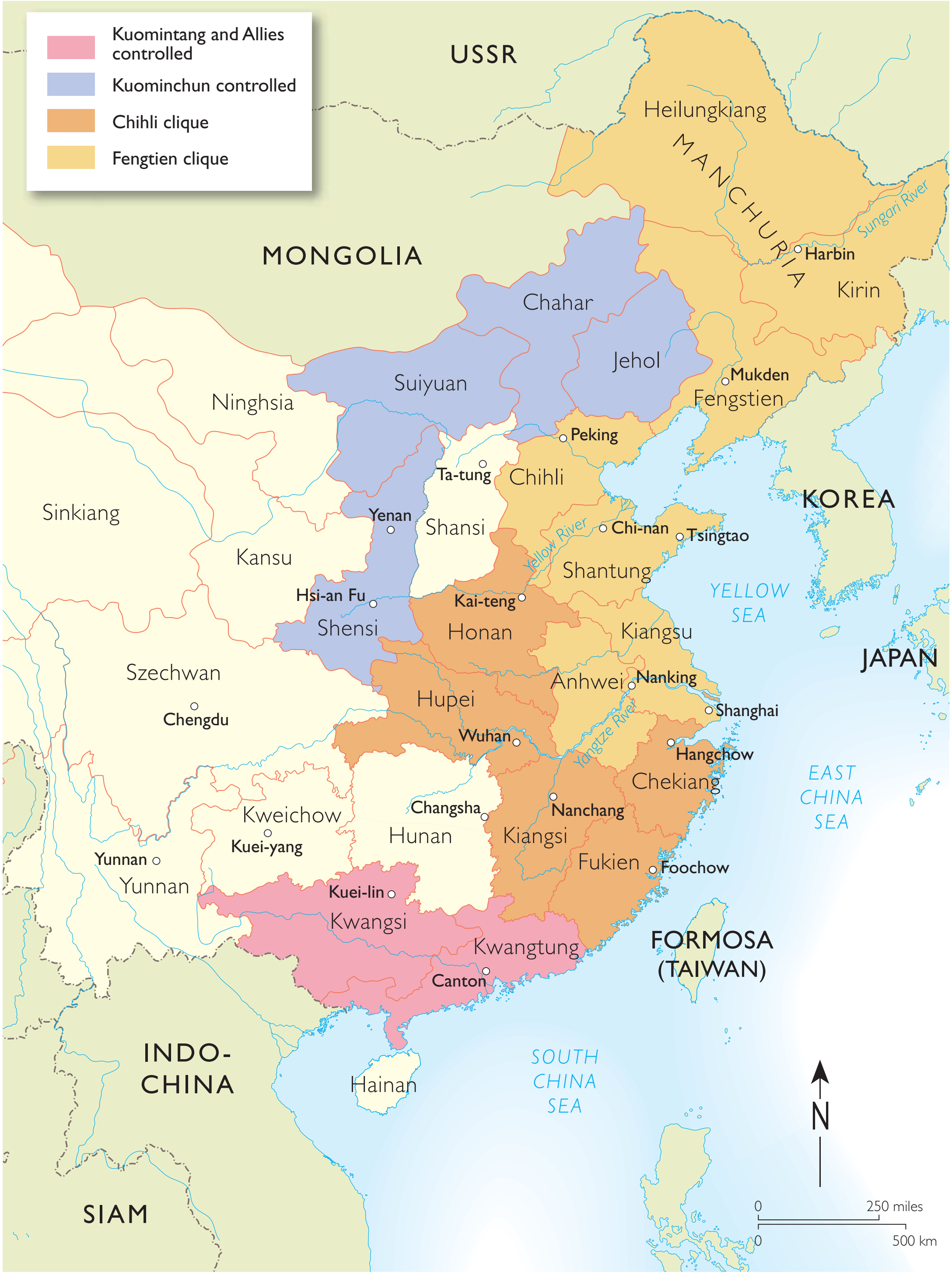
THE SECOND CHIHLI–FENGTIEN WAR

The conflict between the Fengtien Clique and the Chihli Clique in 1924 was one of the most significant conflicts of the 1920s. The war was triggered by the Chekiang–Kiangsu War of the summer when the Fengtien and Chihli cliques supported rival warlords. Chang Tso-lin used this smaller provincial conflict as an excuse to go to war with Wu Pei-fu and the Chihli Army. Chang was still bitter about the humiliating defeat dealt him by the Chihli Clique in 1922, and was ready to use the re-trained and re-organized army which he had been preparing ever since.

The Fengtien Army numbered 250,000 men and was made up of 27 brigades formed into three armies of three divisions each. Since 1922 the re-training programme had improved the army's performance significantly with the 2nd and 6th brigades particularly effective. At the start of the war the Chihli Army throughout north and central China had 22 divisions and 22 mixed brigades at its disposal, which at the time was a majority of the regular formations in China. With reserve and other irregular units it was estimated that Wu Pei-fu and the Chihli Clique had, on paper, 480,000 men. This figure, however, included troops whose loyalty to the Chihli clique was dubious and only a minority of this number could be relied on if things did not go according to plan. Both the Chihli and Fengtien armies had air forces with several hundred aircraft involved in the fighting. They also had large numbers of field guns and machine guns, although the Fengtien Army had superiority in both. Wu's more reliable


This lady is the fearsome General Wong, who commanded a division of Kwangtung troops in the fighting against the Cantonese troops of Chiang Kai-shek in June 1925. Little is known about this female commander although it was sometimes the case that widows assumed command when their husbands were killed in battle. She is prepared for action with a revolver hanging by her side and plenty of spare bullets in her leather cartridge belt.

MAIN WARLORD CLIQUES AFTER THE SECOND CHIHLI-FENGTIEN WAR, 1924


Kuomintang and Allies controlled
Kuominchun controlled
Chihli clique
Fengtien clique
USSR
MONGOLIA
Heilungkiang
MANCHURIA
Sungari River
Harbin
Kirin
Chahar
Jehol
Mukden
Fengstien
Suiyuan
Ninghsia
Peking
Ta-tung
Chihli
KOREA
Sinkiang
Yenan
Shansi
Chi-nan
Tsingtao
Yellow River
Shantung
YELLOW SEA
Kansu
Hsi-an Fu
Kai-teng
Shensi
Honan
Kiangsu
JAPAN
Szechwan
Anhwei
Nanking
Chengdu
Hupei
Shanghai
Wuhan
Yangtze River
Hangchow
Chekiang
EAST CHINA SEA
Changsha
Nanchang
Kweichow
Hunan
Kiangsi
Kuei-yang
Yunnan
Yunnan
Fukien
Foochow
Kuei-lin
Kwangsi
Kwangtung
FORMOSA (TAIWAN)
Canton
INDO-CHINA
Hainan
SOUTH CHINA SEA
N
0
250 miles
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500 km
SIAM

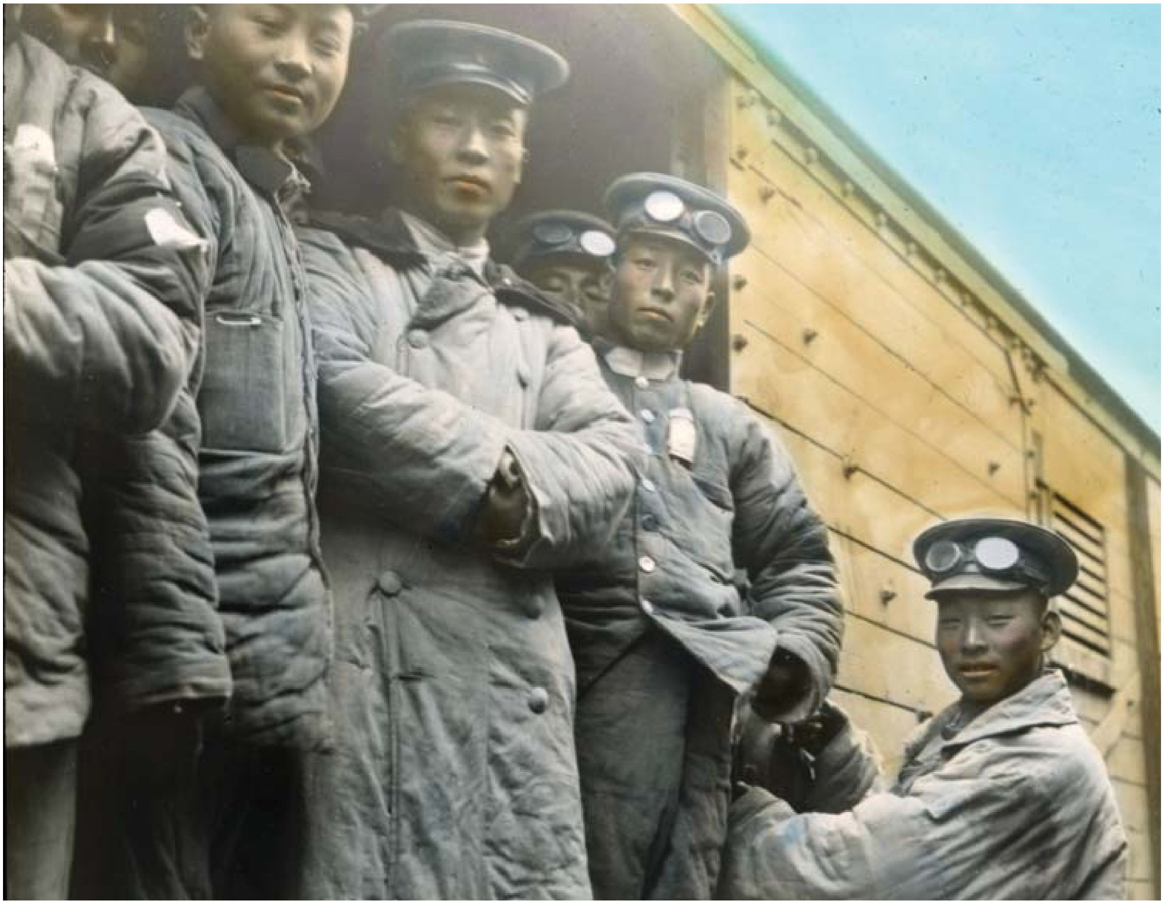
Previous page
Cantonese troops of the newly formed National Revolutionary Army march into Canton in June 1925. The re-capture of the Kuomintang capital which had been occupied by soldiers from the provinces of Yunnan and Kwangsi for a year was vital to Chiang Kai-shek's plans. Most of the poorly dressed troops have a uniform and equipment of sorts with headgear being either a peaked cap or a bamboo sun hat.

troops were estimated to belong to nine divisions, nine mixed brigades and five reserve regiments with a strength of 200,000 men.

The war was instigated by the Fengtien Army, whose plans for the conflict had been carefully prepared over the previous year with help from Chang Tso-lin's Japanese military advisors. The main part of the plan called for the main force to head for Peking and Tsinan with the first target being the strategic pass at Shanhaikuan. At the same time the 2nd Army was to march on Jehol with large numbers of cavalry to outflank the Chihli defenders there. The Chihli Army was split into three armies with the 3rd Army commanded by Feng Yu-hsiang, hero of the 1922 war against Fengtien. On 13 September, Chang Tso-lin declared war on Wu Pei-fu and the Fengtien Army advanced. Fighting on the Shanwaikuan Front was soon bogged down with Wu countering Chang's every move. Meanwhile on the Jehol Front the Fengtien Army made good progress and the conflict may well have developed into a stalemate. However, on 20 October Wu's most dependable commander, Feng Yu-hsiang, withdrew his troops from the Jehol Front as part of an agreement with Chang Tso-lin. He then embarked on an epic route march which took his forces to the gates of Chihli-controlled Peking and he occupied the city. This betrayal threw Wu Pei-fu's war plans into disarray and he had no choice but to withdraw units from the Shanhaikuan Front. Chihli units fell apart without their leader at the front and the war was virtually over. Wu's remaining units on the Shanhaikuan Front were hit by overwhelming Fengtien forces and were attacked from behind. Wu could not get the reinforcements he needed from his still-loyal Southern troops as the railways were blocked by hostile warlords. The war ended with a decisive Fengtien victory and heavy casualties estimated at over 30,000 men. At the end of the war the defeat of Wu Pei-fu and the disbandment of his Chihli Army changed the military complexion of China overnight. Eleven Chihli divisions and seven mixed brigades were disbanded or absorbed by the victorious Fengtien Army. Chang Tso-lin gained 80,000 new recruits while two of his main commanders received four mixed brigades of Chihli troops each. The Chihli Clique still had nine divisions left after the debacle but these probably belonged to the less reliable category. Wu removed himself temporarily from the warlord stage and regrouped his remaining troops in Hunan province. Although his forces fought in the coming conflict between the Fengtien Army and Kuominchun he was never able to dominate China as he had once between 1920 and 1924.

THE FENGTIEN–KUOMINCHUN WAR

The end of the 1924 war between Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien Army and the Chihli Army of Wu Pei-fu saw a new balance of power in north and central China. After his *coup d'état*, Feng Yu-hsiang was now in competition with his erstwhile ally Chang Tso-lin. Although Feng and Chang had been happy to cooperate to defeat Wu they had no plans for a long-term alliance. Feng's troops, who had initially occupied Peking by themselves, were renamed the 'Kuominchun' or 'National People's Army'. Feng now showed his strongly republican and left-wing policies by throwing the ex-Emperor Pu Yi and his entourage out of the Forbidden City. Chang Tso-lin subsequently sent large numbers of his Fengtien troops into Peking to join their Kuominchun 'allies'. The armies jointly garrisoned the city for a while although the relationship between them was strained. At this point Chang Tso-lin was already building up a military alliance

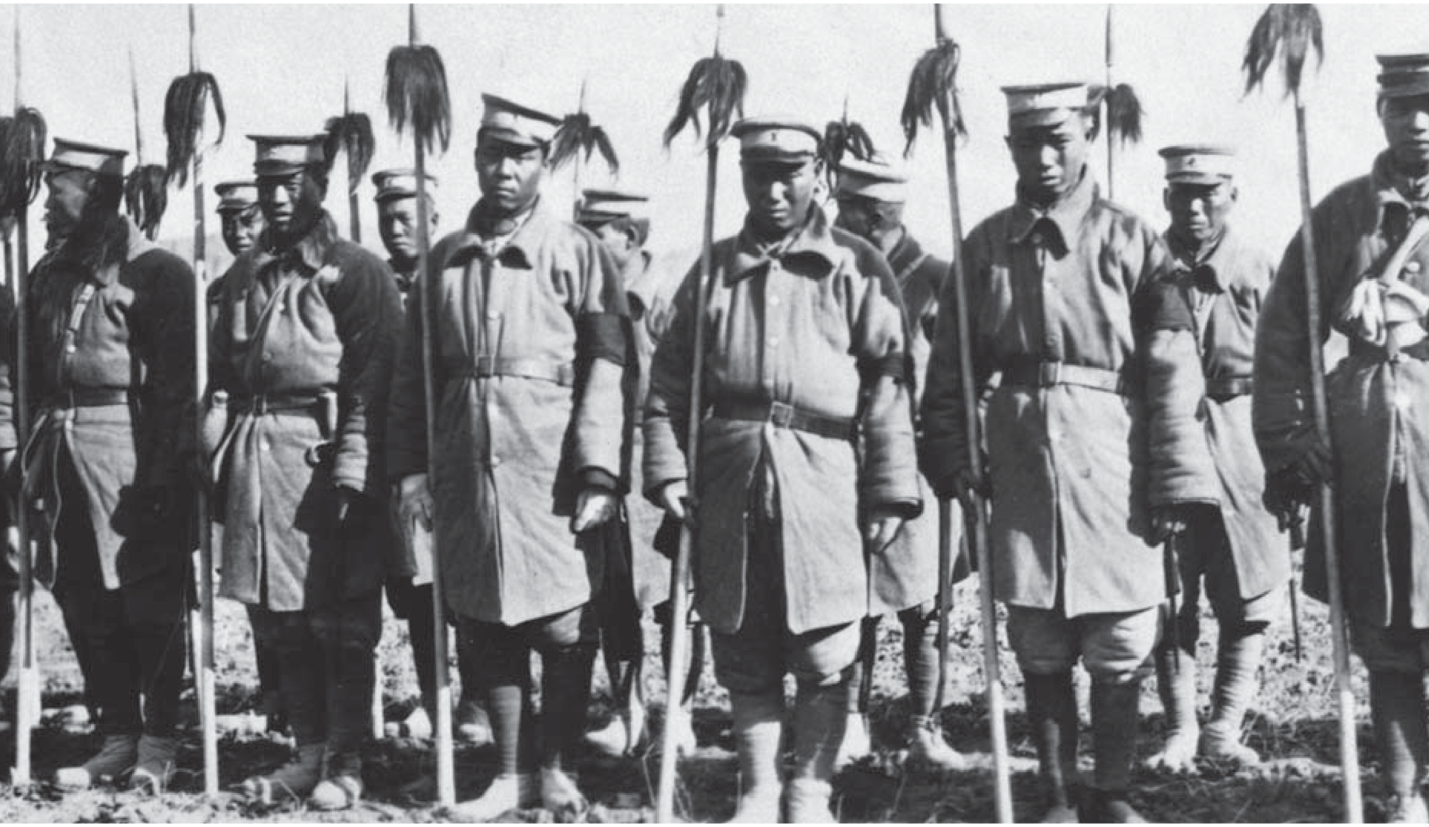


Soldiers of Feng Yu-hsiang are transported to the front line in a goods wagon in the fighting of 1925–26. Feng's Kuominchun or National People's Army was one of the better warlord armies of the 1920s. Although hand-tinted this glass plate gives us an idea of the padded grey cotton uniforms worn by most warlord troops and many soldiers have been issued with car goggles to protect against dust storms on the march.

of the north-eastern provinces against Feng. Feng well aware of what Chang was planning was simultaneously trying to form his own North Western Alliance.

War between the two powerful warlords was now inevitable, although both were waiting for the right moment to attack. Both men sought military aid from abroad with Chang getting most of his from Japan and Feng getting his from his new supporter, the Soviet Union. Increasingly concerned about the aid Feng was receiving from the Soviets, Chang decided that he should strike before the balance of power shifted too much against him. Feng's Soviet support made it difficult for Chang to make any move against him, but Chang was still determined to fight, and sent a strong Fengtien Army into the Peking–Tientsin area as a direct provocation. In an attempt to stall the inevitable war Feng allowed them to take the positions they wanted.

When war did finally erupt in the spring it was not started by either Feng or Chang but by the 'Nanking Warlord' Sun Ch'uan-fang. Sun, a

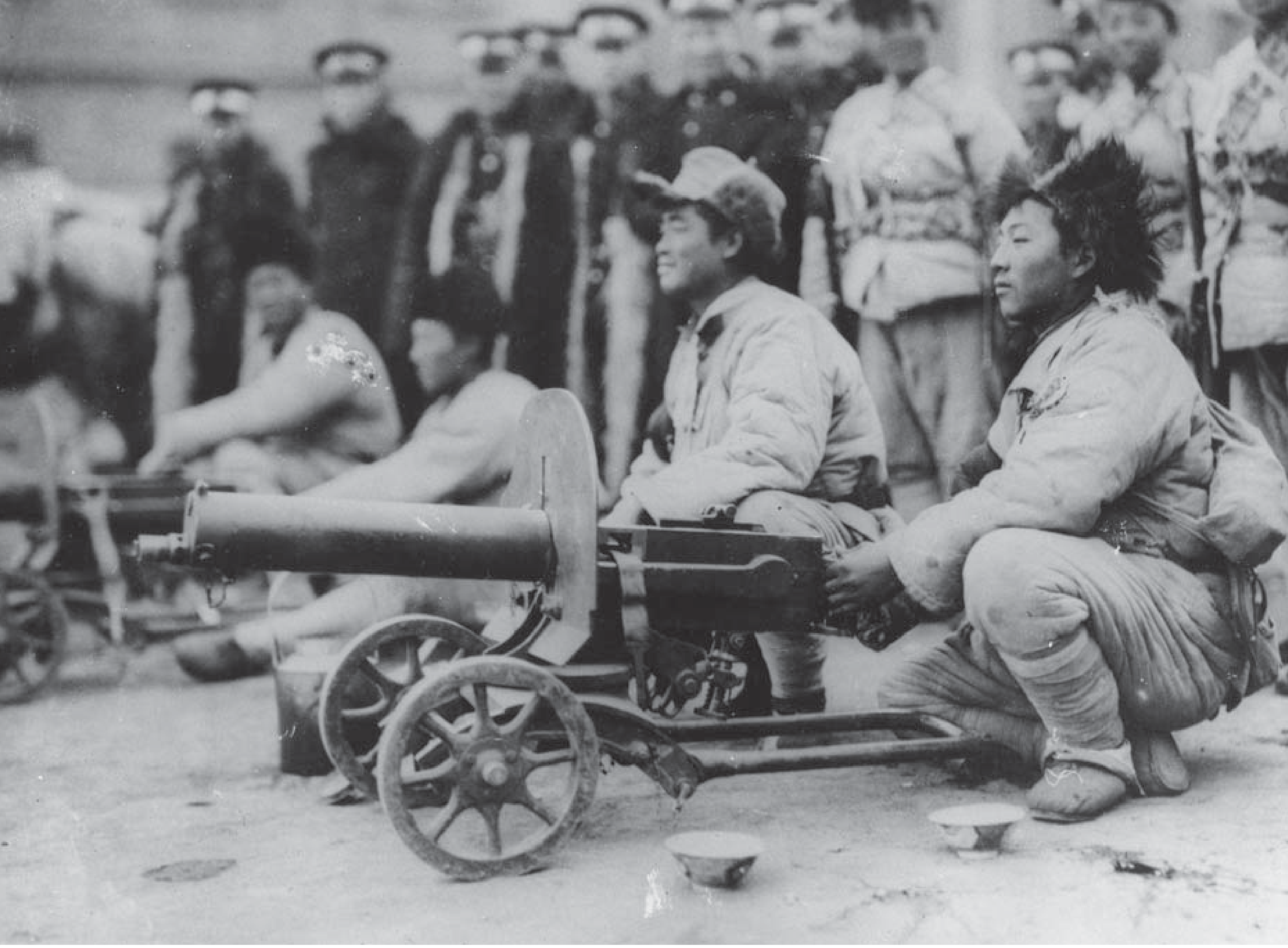


These 'Ankuochun Lancers' pictured in 1927 are, not as their nickname suggests, cavalry but are in fact infantry armed with primitive spears. Their commander Marshal Sun Ch'uan-fang could not supply all his men with rifles during their fighting against the National Revolutionary Army. He desperately resorted to arming whole regiments with spears until he could import enough rifles.

powerful former Chihli general, was unhappy about the Fengtien Army's control of Kiangsu province, which he considered part of his domain. When Sun and his army attacked the Fengtien armies stationed in Kiangsu, Feng saw the opportunity he had been waiting for. Knowing that Chang was planning to attack him he realized that an anti-Fengtien alliance with Sun could defeat Chang Tso-lin's more powerful army. Feng planned that as Chang's troops moved southwards to attack Sun's army he would bring some of his Kuominchun troops in from their bases in the north-west to cut Chang off from his Manchurian base, and then his and Sun's troops could envelop the Fengtien forces.

Chang sent 70,000 troops to attack Sun, who had moved into Kiangsu and Anhwei provinces but Feng did not carry through his plan and simply took up defensive positions. Sun inflicted a heavy defeat on the Fengtien Army, took the two provinces he coveted and halted his advance. Feng, whose troops had hardly moved in the conflict, asked Chang for peace even though he had not truly gone to war! Feng's fiendish plan, it was assumed, was that Sun and Chang's armies would destroy each other allowing him to then move his unscathed Kuominchun against the Fengtien Army and possibly Sun's forces as well. On 22 November, events now turned to Feng's advantage when one of Chang's leading Fengtien generals, Kuo Sung-ling, launched a rebellion against him with the tacit support of the Kuominchun Army (see below). As things went against Kuo, Feng was forced to make good his promise of support so on 2 December he sent 80,000 troops against the Fengtien Army in the area around the city of Tientsin. Clashes between Feng's troops under the command of General Chang Chih-chiang and the Fengtien troops under General Li Ching-lin began on the 9th. The fighting between the two armies was described as some of the bitterest of the warlord period with no quarter given. Fighting in the freezing Chinese winter made the fighting particularly gruesome although Li's troops – outnumbered three to one – held out for several weeks. When Li finally had to yield the city of Tientsin on 23 December he was satisfied as he had inflicted heavy casualties on the Kuominchun and withdrew with his army largely intact. The defeat of Kuo's rebellion the next day left Feng and his Kuominchun exposed and although they had won a battle, the 'Christian warlord' now knew he was likely to lose the war. Large forces began to mass against the Kuominchun with the armies of Li Ching-lin and Chang Tsung-ch'ang in Shantung preparing to attack. Chang Tso-lin's victorious troops who had defeated Kuo were also available to fight Feng and were joined by Kuo's former soldiers, who were accepted back in the Fengtien Army. As a final hammer blow to Feng, Wu Pei-fu now joined an unlikely alliance with Chang Tso-lin – Wu's dislike of Chang Tso-lin, who had defeated him in battle in 1924, was not as deep as that for Feng who had betrayed him in October 1924. Feng now made a typically Chinese decision and resigned his position as head of the Kuominchun and handed over command to Chang Chih-chiang. This resignation did not satisfy the Chang–Wu alliance and hostilities began immediately with Wu advancing into Honan province which was controlled by the 2nd Kuominchun Army. Wu Pei-fu was victorious by February and then the Fengtien armies began an offensive against the Kuominchun in Chihli province.

In March another large offensive was launched against the 3rd Kuominchun around Tientsin. The Kuominchun forces crumpled, but units of the 1st Kuominchun which still contained Feng's best troops held onto the city. Attempts by the Soviets to re-supply the garrison in Tientsin failed and on 20 March the 100,000 men defending the city withdrew. The evacuation of the Kuominchun from Tientsin was a superbly organized operation and most of the men safely reached Peking which was still held by their troops. After holding the now besieged capital for a few weeks the Kuominchun evacuated Peking on 16 April. They then took up new defensive positions 30 miles to the north-west of the city at Nankow Pass. Extensive entrenchments were dug and these, combined with the terrain of the pass, made their position almost impenetrable. Some Soviet arms supplies now reached the defenders and new recruits were brought in from Mongolia to strengthen the defence. Rumours of Soviet advisors fighting side by side with the Kuominchun troops were probably true. The defence held out although in May the Kuominchun managed to acquire another enemy – the Shansi Warlord Yen Hsi-shan whose troops clashed with them in Northern Shansi province. Yen was worried that the Kuominchun might try and retreat through his province and might even attempt to remain there. Meanwhile the 90,000 defenders were still holding back the combined Feng–Wu alliance forces of up to 450,000 men. Eventually the pressure told and it was decided in August 1926 to withdraw from Nankow Pass and retreat westwards towards Kansu province. The withdrawal was beset by problems as bandits attacked the Kuominchun units and many troops deserted. While this struggle was going on in north-west China other important events were happening in the south. The Kuomintang and its National Revolutionary Army had launched its Northern Expedition which would cause problems for the



In early 1926 soldiers of the Kuominchun man Maxim M1910 heavy machine guns supplied by the Soviet Union the year before. They are fighting against the troops of the Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin for control of northern China. Their commander Feng Yu-hsiang was attempting to rival Chang as the dominant military leader in China.

Fengtien Army and its ally Wu Pei-fu. The Kuominchun were temporarily removed from the main theatre of conflict and licked their wounds until they were ready to re-join the fighting in 1927.

THE KUO SUNG-LING REBELLION

The victory of Chang Tso-lin and the Fengtien Clique over Wu Pei-fu in 1924 should have left him in a unassailable position in China. A year after that victory however, he was faced by a rebellion from among his most trusted subordinates that nearly succeeded in toppling him from power.

General Kuo Sung-ling was one of Chang's best field commanders, who had fought loyally for him for many years. However he grew disgruntled not just with his own military career but also with the way that Chang ran the army. General Kuo began plotting with Feng Yu-hsiang,

During the 1925–26 campaign against the Fengtien Army, General Chang Chih-chiang was in charge of the 80,000-strong 1st Kuominchun Army. General Chang was Feng Yu-hsiang's most able commanders and took over command of the Kuominchun Army after their defeat in 1926 when Feng went into exile in an attempt to defuse the conflict between the Fengtien and Kuominchun armies.

who was at loggerheads with Chang, and together they hoped that they could form a pact to reportedly overthrow warlordism. While campaigning in Chihli province General Kuo was called to the Fengtien headquarters at Mukden and, fearing that Chang had found out about his plans, he started to prepare his rebellion in earnest. He first met with Chang Tso-lin's son, the 'Young Marshal' Chang Hsueh-liang, in an attempt to get him to force a peaceful succession. This failed, so having telegraphed Chang Tso-lin to say he was on his way to Mukden, he called together his commanders and told them his plans. About 30 of them refused to rebel against Chang Tso-lin and after they were locked up Kuo issued a open telegram listing all his leader's failures and faults. Kuo Sung-ling's 50,000 troops, who were amongst the best in the Fengtien Army, then advanced from Chihli to Shanwaikuan at the eastern end of the Great Wall and waited. Along the way they defeated any loyal Fengtien units that blocked their advance. It looked like Chang's hold on power might be over.

Chang sent his son to see Kuo again on 27 November and offered a ceasefire, but when this was refused he put up a 800,000 Yuan reward on the rebel general's head. The wily Chang then signed a secret agreement with his Japanese sponsors, and the Japanese Kwangtung Army commander General Hirogowa issued an edict banning military 'activity' within 10 miles of the South Manchurian Railway. This edict effectively stopped Kuo from advancing his army towards Mukden and stalled his plans for a quick victory. The Japanese made efforts to broker a peace deal between Kuo and Chang but the former rejected this offer. This prompted the Japanese to find their own solution to the conflict, which they felt was affecting their interests in Manchuria. They set up a field headquarters at Mukden on 9 December and sent substantial reinforcements to the area controlled by Kuo. General Kuo then advanced with his force towards the Japanese and reached as far as the city of Ying-Kou before being halted by their presence. Kuo had expected support from other Fengtien commanders including generals Chang Tsung-ch'ang and Li Ching-lin, but it did not materialize. His men began to lose heart and the cold weather, in particular sapped their morale and they began to slip away. When the expected battle between Kuo's army and Chang Tso-lin's army took place the rebels' depleted forces were defeated. Kuo was captured on 24 December and the next day he and his wife were unceremoniously taken out and shot. In an final indignity for Kuo, Chang was reported to have had the heads and legs of the 'traitorous' general and his wife carried in front of his troops in a victory parade.

THE EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY ARMY

In the early 1920s, the politician Sun Yat-sen had realized that the only way for his Kuomintang Party to gain power in China was by military means. At around the same time, in 1921, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was formed by Mao Tse-tung, the son of a wealthy farmer from Hunan province. He had developed a strong socialist belief in his youth, and had been inspired by the 1911 Revolution, but like most Chinese was disillusioned by its aftermath, and felt that Marxist philosophy was the answer to China's many problems. At first Mao's CCP was a small and ineffective group which took its instructions directly from the Comitern in Moscow. The Communist International 'Comintern' was an international Communist organization formed in 1919 with the aim of promoting Communism throughout the world. It directed most countries' Communist parties, including the CCP. From 1922 it started infiltrating the Kuomintang Party in Canton with the aim that eventually it could be taken over from within. In January 1924 Michael Borodin, a senior Comintern advisor, working with Sun Yat-sen in Canton, got him to agree to the admission of individual members of the CCP into the Kuomintang. In return for Sun's agreement, the Kuomintang was to receive substantial Soviet arms from Moscow, and a number of Soviet military advisors to help run Sun Yat-sen's new military academy, which would train the officers of a new politically motivated army. Chiang Kai-shek, Sun Yat-sen's military commander, was to lead the academy with the help of Soviet advisors who would be twinned with Chinese officers. The Soviet advisors wanted the course to last for 18 months but Chiang insisted that this was too long as it was imperative to have an army ready as soon as possible to launch a northern expedition. Eventually, after much arguing,

Doctor Sun Yat-sen, the 'father' of the Chinese Revolution, pictured at his home in Canton during the early 1920s. Sun was born in 1866, trained as a doctor in Hong Kong, and was involved in revolutionary politics from the late 19th century. He formed the Tongmeng hui, which helped in the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911 and then the Kuomintang political party. Shortly after his death in 1925 his successor Chiang Kai-shek launched Sun's long-planned Northern Expedition to crush the northern warlords.

The young Muslim General Pai Chuang-hsi is pictured wearing the uniform of the early National Revolutionary Army in 1927. Pai was one of the three leaders of the 'new' Kwangsi Clique which took over the province in the mid-1920s. They brought their well-trained forces into the National Revolutionary Army during the Northern Expedition of 1926–28. General Pai was regarded as one of the best Nationalist commanders during the 1926–49 period. He was never a Chiang loyalist and his troops rebelled on several occasions against the Nationalist government.

a six-month course was agreed and the site was established at Whampoa, an island 10 miles south of Canton. Part of the agreement between Sun and Borodin allowed for the Communist Chou En-lai to be given the post of deputy director of the Political Department at the academy. Communist members were heavily involved in the organization of the Kuomintang's new army.

When the academy opened in May 1924 its first intake was 645 students out of a total of 3,000 who had applied to join. As well as the military training they received, the cadets were also given revolutionary lectures in the evenings. The academy continued to take in new cadets throughout 1924 and 1925 from all over China and even from Mongolia and French Indo-China. By January 1926 a total of 5,540 cadets had graduated from Whampoa and these were to form the cadre for the Kuomintang Party's new 'National Revolutionary Army'. One of the first jobs for the cadets to do in 1925 was to disarm the warlord forces in and around Canton and to dismiss their commanders. Any troops from the defeated army who were fit to join the National Revolutionary Army were allowed to but many were hopeless opium addicts.

By 1926 the NRA had grown to 100,000 men but there were few rifles for the expanding force. In total there were 65,000 rifles in NRA hands but most of these were museum pieces captured from the warlord troops in 1925. They also had 370 machine guns and 70 artillery pieces, which were mainly old mountain guns. Ratios of men to weapons showed the problems that the NRA had, with only one field gun per 1,000 men and one machine gun per 250. When supplies of Soviet arms arrived in 1924 they enabled the NRA to prepare to launch its long-planned expedition to defeat the Northern Warlords. Between October 1924 and October 1926 the NRA received from the Soviet Union 157 field guns, 48 mountain guns, 128 mortars, 295 machine guns and 74,000 rifles. They also received 24 aircraft, mostly of the R1M5 type which was a Soviet copy of the British De Havilland DH-9.

This National Revolutionary Army had been formed to give the Kuomintang a military force to bring about the overthrow of the warlords. With the Communist involvement it increasingly began to take on the culture of a left-wing army. It was decided, for instance, that political officers like the Soviet commissars would be attached to every NRA unit. Most political officers were to come from the ranks of the Communists, which deeply worried Chiang Kai-shek, the right-wing commander of the NRA. Although he needed the Soviet armaments that were arriving at

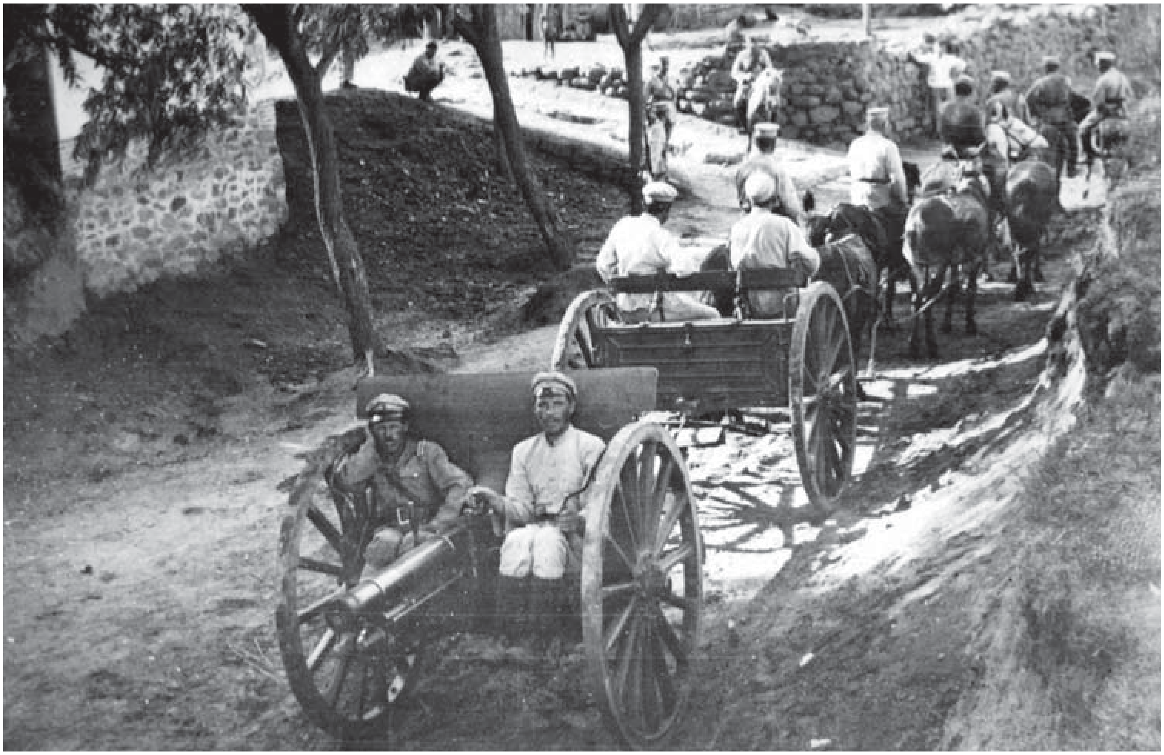
Canton thanks to Sun's agreement with the Comintern, he did not want 'Reds' in his army.

When the NRA was preparing for the launch of the Northern Expedition in 1925 it was made up of five loosely organized armies. The 1st was made up of the Whampoa graduates, the 2nd from 15,000 Hunnanese troops of General T'anYen-k'ai and the 3rd from Yunnanese troops of General Chu P'ei-te. A 4th Army was formed from a Cantonese force under the command of General Li Chi-shen and the 5th was recruited from Fukienese troops under General Li Fu-lin. A 6th Army was subsequently formed in November from another group of Hunnanese troops under the command of General Ch'eng Ch'ien and then a 7th joined in February 1926 made up of 30,000 troops of the Kwangsi Clique. This approximately 100,000-strong army was soon to grow within five months of the start of the Northern Expedition into a total force of 264,000 men in 200 regiments. Most of these new soldiers were from the armies of defecting warlord commanders. Many converted warlords had to be offered the rank of general by the NRA even if they only commanded a few regiments. As these new units advanced northwards the Kuomintang representative tried to instil in them some revolutionary zeal. This was often not possible as most of the troops had simply joined the NRA because their commander had as opposed to any commitment to the revolutionary cause. Although arms shipments still arrived in far-off Canton, by the campaigns of 1927 the National Revolutionary Army had captured plenty of artillery and small arms to equip their men. In February 1928 the ever-expanding NRA was re-organized into four group armies with the absorption of the Kuominchun and the Shansi Army. The original NRA became the 1st Group Army, the 2nd Group Army was made up of Feng Yu-hsiang's Kuominchun, the 3rd Group Army was formed from Yen His-shan's Shansi Army and the 4th from troops of the Kwangsi Clique.

THE NORTHERN WARLORD ARMIES 1926–28

The northern warlords who were waiting for the Northern Expedition with some confidence commanded a substantial number of troops between them – in total it was estimated that between 700,000 and a million men were under arms in the various warlord armies. By 1927 Chang Tso-lin and his Fengtien Clique had the most men with an estimated 350,000. They were well-armed and equipped with the best weaponry that Chang had been able to buy using the resources of his vast territories in Manchuria and northern China. Chang Tsung-ch'ang, a subordinate commander of Chang Tso-lin, had over 150,000 men and the 'Nanking Warlord' Sun Ch'uan-funhad on paper 200,000 men. Other armies included those of Wu Pei-fu who, after his defeat by the Fengtien Army in 1924 had re-built his forces up to about 80,000 men. Other independently minded militarists who might oppose the Northern Expedition included Yen Hsi-shan, the 'Shansi warlord', who had about 100,000–150,000 men. If united the northern warlords were more than capable of defeating the coming expedition, but if they fought as separate armies the National Revolutionary Army could potentially defeat them one by one. Their history of factional infighting did not bode well for any cooperation between the various armies in the face of the more professional National Revolutionary Army.

Amongst the northern armies fighting the National Revolutionary Army were a number of White Russian mercenaries. Relatively large numbers of émigré White Russians fought in China during the 1920s for several northern warlords. Most were refugees from the Russian Civil War



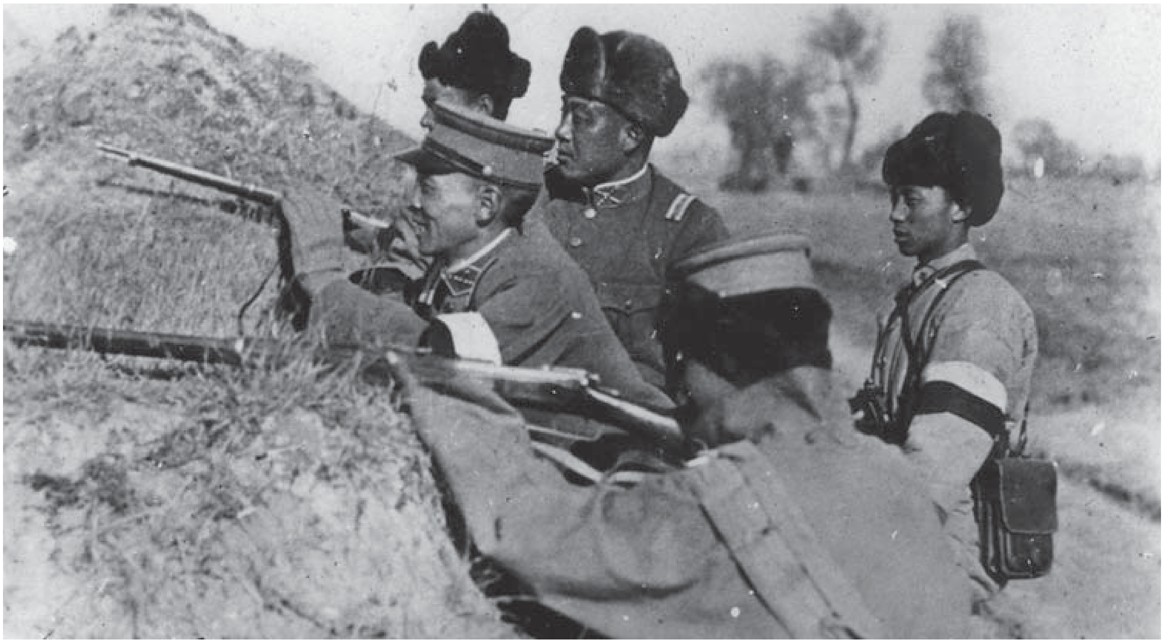
White Russian mercenaries serving in the artillery of the Ankuochun Army in 1927 ride on their field gun towards the front. The 5,000 or so Russians who fought in China in the 1920s were usually given the job of crewing armoured trains or manning artillery. Often they had not been trained in the task they were given but were expected to know how to operate artillery or machine guns and often had to learn as they went along.

and many had served in the fighting in Siberia between 1917 and 1922. Nearly all the White Russians were expected to perform technical roles for the warlords and man artillery and armoured trains. Often they were expected to do these jobs even if they had not been in the same branch during their service in the Russian Imperial or White Russian armies. Chang Tso-lin, who had made contacts with some White Russians during the fighting in Siberia before 1922, recruited his first White Russian unit in August 1924. He had already hired a number of White Russians to fly some of his aircraft and now wanted some soldiers to man his artillery. The unit had soon expanded from 500 to 700 men and was put together in a unit with 300 Japanese and two companies of Manchurian troops. These troops were reported to have fought well and were retained when the Japanese were sent home by Chang. By 1925 Chang had 1,200 White Russians with new recruits coming from the defeated Chekiang Army from the Kiangsu–Chekiang War.

Other northern military commanders began to recruit White Russians and General Chang Tsung-ch'ang had his own cavalry squadron made up of émigré officers. Chang Tsung-ch'ang became the main employer of White Russians and had a total of 5,270 within his army in special units. Cossacks were formed into bodyguard units and a special 185-man grenadier unit was trained to fire grenades from catapults! In Shantung province there was a 700-strong cavalry regiment under the command of Colonel Saraeff and a 1,200-strong 65th Infantry Division under the command of a General Netchaieff. Chang Tsung-ch'ang also formed an artillery regiment whose crews were all White Russians instead of the usual mix of Russians and Chinese. US observers who saw the Russians in action said that they fought well but that their fire-control methods had not been altered since 1914. Support units were formed from amongst the Russians' families with some officers' wives trained as nurses and youths enrolled into a cavalry cadet school. Feng Yu-hsiang did not employ White Russians to fight for him but did have a small number of them on his staff. For most of the Russians, their time in China was bleak with poor morale due to the regularly late arrival of pay and their inadequate living conditions. The officers and men fell out amongst themselves with the soldiers often behaving brutally towards the Chinese population. When the northern armies were defeated the White Russians could expect little mercy from the enemy soldiers or civilians. Few Russians survived the war and those who did had to look for another country in which to continue their exile.

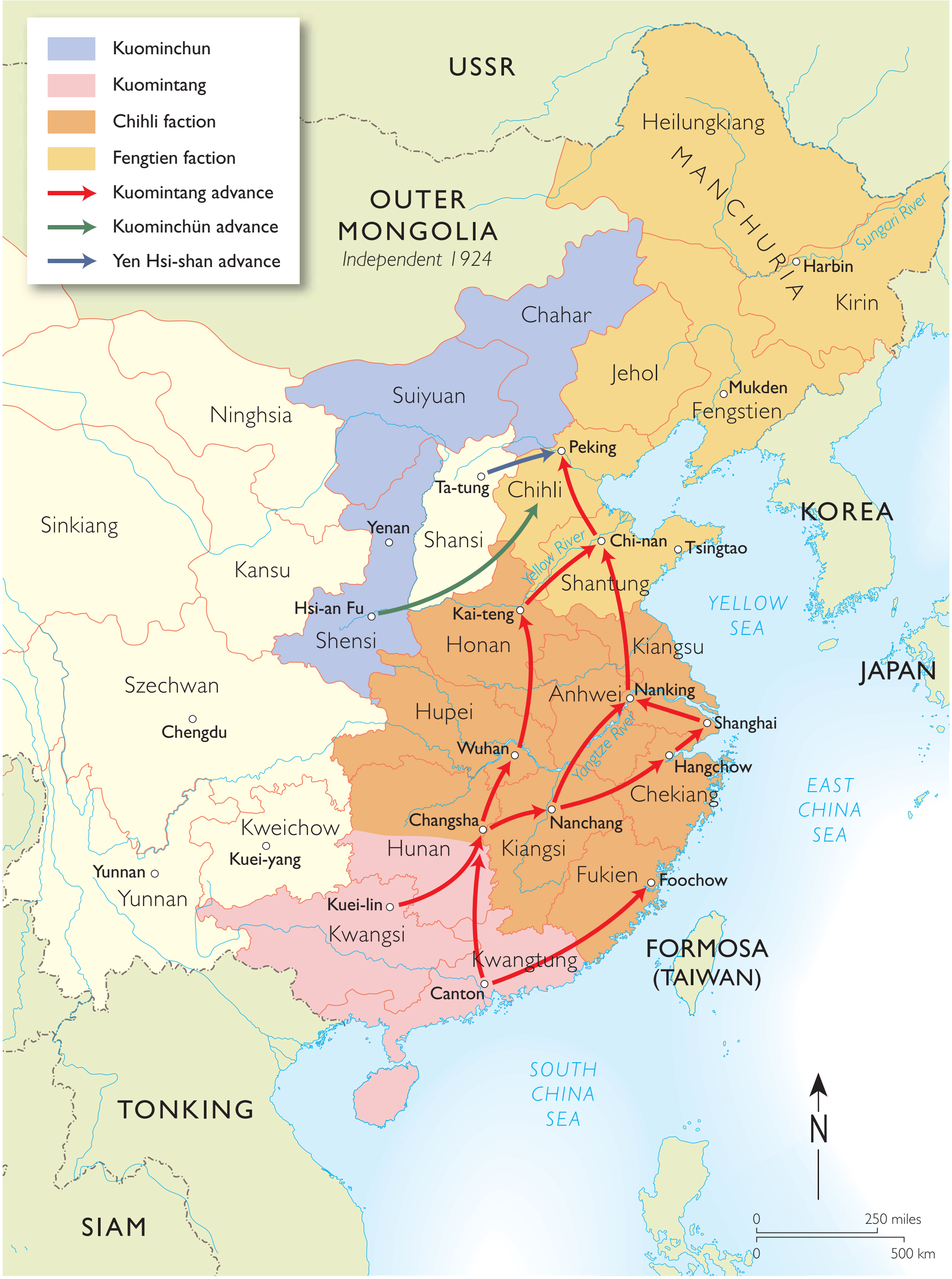
THE LAUNCH OF THE NORTHERN EXPEDITION

By 1925, Sun Yat-sen's dream of uniting China by his National Revolutionary Army advancing northwards from its Canton base was within reach, but his premature death in March 1925 from cancer robbed him of the chance to see this dream fulfilled. Chiang Kai-shek, who took over the leadership of the Kuomintang after Sun's death, was not an idealist like his predecessor. He was a realist who was prepared to use any means that he could to crush the northern militarists who had divided China since 1916. Before he could launch the Northern Expedition he knew that he had to secure his army's rear, which meant defeating any remaining enemies in the south. In February 1925 the first of a series of Eastern expeditions was launched to defeat the Kwangtung warlord Ch'en Chiung-ming. Although Ch'en had been a one-time supporter of Sun Yat-sen he was now seen as a threat to the National Revolutionary Army. On 15 February an important battle took place at Tamshui and Ch'en's army was defeated losing 2,000 men. This victory was followed by a successful campaign against Hunanese troops who controlled Canton city itself. Again the NRA was victorious and the Hunanese were forced to retreat back to their home province. Ch'en had retreated in the meantime to his base at Waichow where he continued to fight the National



Staff officers of the Ankuochun Army make a visit to the front line during fighting against the National Revolutionary Army in 1927. Most warlord armies wore the same grey cotton uniforms and wore armbands on their jacket sleeves to distinguish them from the enemy. The officers are wearing their service uniforms and have the crossed-baton symbol of the general staff on their tunic collars.

THE NORTHERN EXPEDITION


Kuominchun
Kuomintang
Chihli faction
Fengtien faction
Kuomintang advance
Kuominchün advance
Yen Hsi-shan advance
USSR
OUTER MONGOLIA
Independent 1924
Heilungkiang
MANCHURIA
Sungari River
Harbin
Kirin
Chahar
Jehol
Mukden
Fengstien
Suiyuan
Ninghsia
Peking
Ta-tung
Chihli
Sinkiang
Yenan
Shansi
KOREA
Chi-nan
Tsingtao
Yellow River
Kansu
Shantung
YELLOW SEA
Hsi-an Fu
Kai-teng
Shensi
Honan
Kiangsu
JAPAN
Szechwan
Anhwei
Nanking
Chengdu
Hupei
Shanghai
Wuhan
Yangtze River
Hangchow
Chekiang
EAST CHINA SEA
Kweichow
Changsha
Nanchang
Kuei-yang
Hunan
Kiangsi
Yunnan
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Revolutionary Army. In a two-month campaign between July and September he was again defeated and was finally forced out of his last headquarters in the city of Swatow in November. The defeat of the last of the Kuomintang's enemies in the southern provinces now allowed for serious planning to begin for the Northern Expedition. The first advances of the 100,000-strong National Revolutionary Army finally began in July 1926.

The Kuomintang was rife with internal rivalries and the left wing of the party was poles apart from Chiang Kai-shek's right wing. When the NRA advance began it was split into two main columns as the left and right wings of the Kuomintang kept their troops separate during the campaign. One larger column led by Chiang Kai-shek and the centre and right-wing of the party headed north-east from Canton. The other smaller central column, largely made up of both Communist members of the Kuomintang and other left-wing members of the party, went north from their base. Although fighting as a united army, the NRA in 1926 was really two armies fighting under the same banner.

Opposite top
Two 77mm field guns of the Ankuochun Army are fired towards positions held by the National Revolutionary Army in 1927. The northern warlords had a superiority in both men and weaponry when the Northern Expedition began in 1926. However, as the NRA achieved more victories and absorbed large numbers of ex-warlord troops into their ranks the northern armies lost their advantage.

The Progress of the Northern Expedition

The first major warlord in the path of the National Revolutionary Army in 1926 was Wu Pei-fu and his 80,000-strong army. His forces, which had not fully recovered from their defeat in 1924, had been defeated by September 1926. He escaped northwards in his armoured train with over 200 trains full of his troops following behind him. By October the NRA captured Wuhan, where Wu had his headquarters, and the Kuomintang leadership decided to move their capital there from Canton. The Kuomintang in Wuhan was, however, dominated by the left wing of the party and Chiang Kai-shek was wary of their influence.

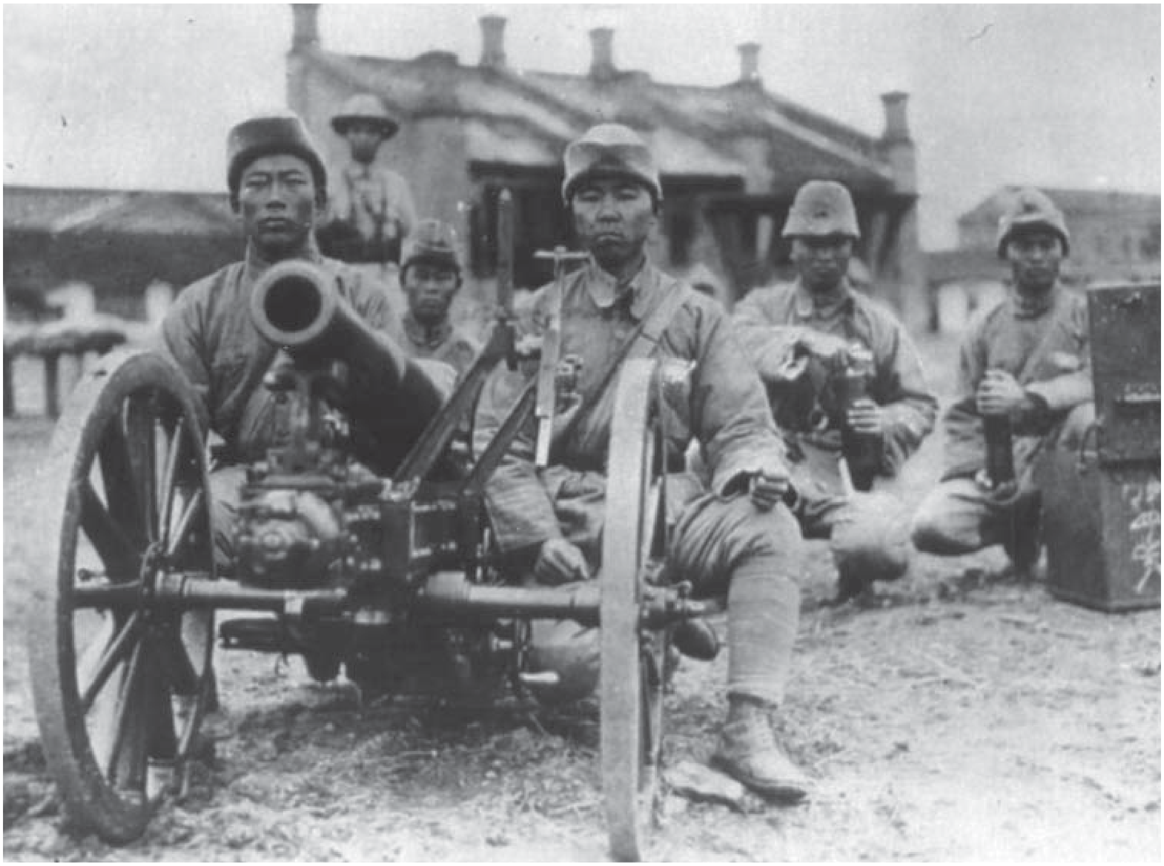
As the NRA continued its advance in late 1926 into Chekiang province Chang Tso-lin, the Fengtien Clique leader, tried to form a united northern warlord army. This 'Ankuochun' was never a truly united army but its formation was intended to galvanize the various warlords' opposition to the Northern Expedition. By early 1927 most of China south of the Yangtze River was in the hands of the NRA. Some warlords had been defeated in battle, while others had simply joined the NRA bringing their armies with them. Most cities and towns were taken with the help of Communist agitators who undermined the defenders by calling strikes. When necessary they could close down railways to prevent the northern warlords from bringing in reinforcements. Although this was certainly

Opposite bottom
These men are members of the workers' militia which took control of Shanghai for a few days in late March 1927. They held the city for a short while after the withdrawal of the northern warlord troops and before the arrival of the National Revolutionary Army. Known in the press as the 'Black Gowned Gunmen' these pro-Communist militiamen would be ruthlessly suppressed by the NRA and its Allies on 12 April.

National Revolutionary Army troops lead Communist prisoners off for execution in Shanghai in March 1927. Once Chiang Kai-shek's troops entered the city they began planning to massacre the Communists who had risen up in their support a few weeks before. He was no longer to tolerate the Communist members of his Kuomintang party and hundreds were shot or beheaded in the massacre by the NRA.

not without its risks as it usually resulted in the execution of striking railway workers and students by the northern warlords.

By spring 1927, the NRA had expanded rapidly to approximately 700,000 men. This expansion has been enabled by the large number of troops from defeated armies who had come over to Chiang Kai-shek. In March, Shanghai, which had been defended by the forces of Sun Ch'uan-fang and Chang Tsung-ch'ang fell to the NRA with help from Communist elements within the city after the northern troops had largely abandoned it. They took over the city before the arrival of the Northern Expedition and waited to greet their advancing comrades. However this move in support of the NRA was seen by Chiang Kai-shek as a threat to his leadership. He was now under increasing pressure from three directions – his own anti-Communist supporters who had always been unhappy about the Communists' role in the NRA, from the Chinese businessmen supporting his army, and from foreign interests – to crush the Communists in his ranks.



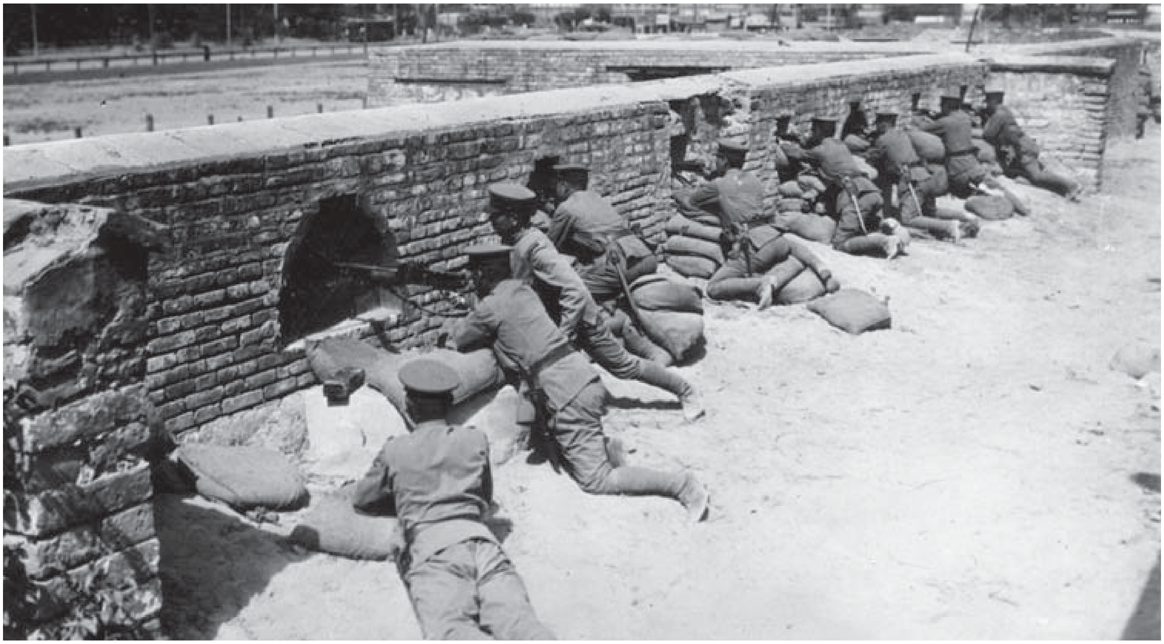
Soldiers of Marshal Sun Chuan-fang's army pose with their mountain gun at Shanghai in early 1927. Sun had originally been a member of the Chihli Clique defeated in the 1924 war with the Fengtien Army but by this date he had joined his troops with the other northern warlords in the Ankuochun Army. Some of Sun's men wore these hats which were unique to his units defending Shanghai and were improvised from felt sun hats.

A few weeks after the NRA entered Shanghai in late March, they launched an attack against the left-wing forces in the city. The massacre of any pro-Communists in Shanghai started on 12 April. Within a few days hundreds of Communists in Shanghai were killed, followed by the executions of thousands of others over the next few weeks. This betrayal by the right wing split the Kuomintang permanently in two. Now there was no pretence of cooperation between the two wings of the party and the conflict between left and right in China began.

Chiang established the new Nationalist capital in recently liberated Nanking in opposition to the left-wing capital now established at Hankow. In May 1927 the left-wing government in Hankow launched a rival Northern Expedition of 30,000 men under the command of General T'ang Sheng-chih. With few men and poor equipment this expedition only had limited objectives and was always going to be sideshow to the main Northern Expedition.

The northern warlords, meanwhile, did not intend to stay on the defensive and in April 1927 they launched a major offensive southwards against the NRA. Although the offensive was initially successful, the Northern troops were unable to cross the Yangtze River and the attack fizzled out. The first year of the Northern Expedition had seen all of China south of the Yangtze River in Nationalist hands. With the Communists temporarily crushed and the Hankow government virtually sidelined, Chiang Kai-shek could now concentrate on defeating the northern warlords who remained. August saw another Ankuochun offensive made up of the armies of Marshal Sun Chuan-fang. His troops crossed the Yangtze and advanced to the NRA-held city of Lung-t'an where the biggest battle of the Northern Expedition took place. The NRA rushed reinforcements to the city and Sun's army retreated having lost 65 per cent of its troops.

In October another 'sideshow' conflict broke out between the forces of the Fengtien Clique under Chang Tso-lin and those of the Shansi Warlord Yen Hsi-shan. The fighting lasted throughout the month and included an epic siege at the city of Soochow involving tanks, armoured trains, aircraft and chemical weapons. The forces of Yen came out the worst, and the defeated Shansi warlord was now poised to join his remaining forces with the NRA.

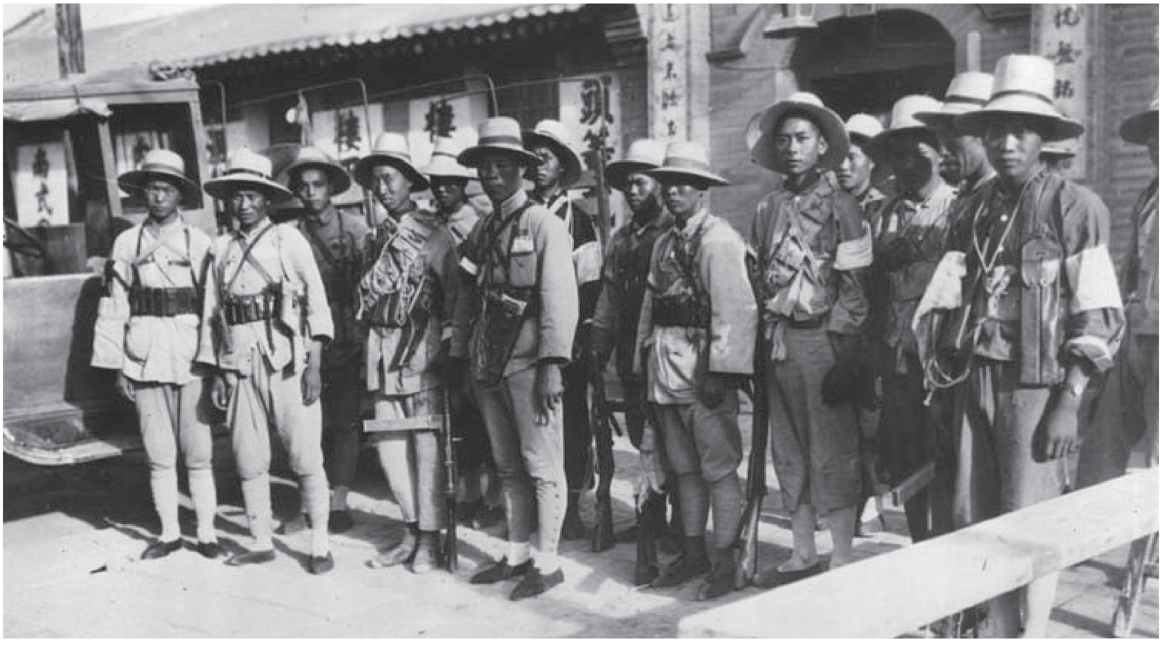


Japanese troops take up positions on Peking's outer walls as the victorious Nationalist troops of Chiang Kai-shek enter the city. Clashes between Japanese soldiers in the north-east of China occurred as the National Revolutionary Army advanced in 1927 and 1928. Japan's excuse of protecting its citizens in China was used over the next few years as a pretext for interfering militarily in Chinese affairs.

In January 1928 the new Nationalist government was sworn in at Nanking and Chiang began to seriously negotiate with Yen Hsi-shan and Feng Yu-hsiang. Feng was still in command of a substantial number of troops from his recently defeated Kuominchun. His army was the final piece in Chiang's plan to create a National Revolutionary Army strong enough to defeat the remaining northern armies. In April the final stage of the Northern Expedition was launched with roughly 1,000,000 men now fighting for the NRA. Chiang Kai-shek had 290,000 under his command and the Kwangsi Clique had 240,000. The newly Allied armies of Feng Yu-hsiang with 310,000 men, and those of the Shansi Warlord Yen Hsi-shan with 150,000 men made up the total. The advance of the NRA with its new Allies was now unstoppable and even Chang Tso-lin had to admit that the end of the northern warlords' resistance was near.

A major NRA offensive was now launched against Marshal Chang Tso-lin's Ankuochun forces. Feng's elite cavalry, along with Chiang's 1st Army, attacked the Army of Chang T'sung-ch'ang in Shantung province. They crossed the Yellow River on 1 May 1928 and the northern general retreated northwards with what was left of his army and joined his superior Chang Tso-lin in Peking. Chang had already begun evacuating his still-sizeable armies out of Peking in preparation for withdrawing to his power base in Manchuria. If he had reached it, he may well have

Soldiers of Feng Yu-hsiang are pictured after their entry into Peking in June 1928. After joining the National Revolutionary Army in 1927, Feng's men were given the task of taking the former Chinese capital. Their large straw hats were a distinguishing feature of Feng's troops in 1928 and on their sleeves they have large armbands carrying revolutionary slogans.



AIRCRAFT IN CHINESE WARFARE 1911–28

China, like all nations in the early years of the 20th century, looked to develop a military air arm. The first attempts by a foreign firm to supply the Imperial government was by the French company Blériot in 1910 but this deal for eight trainer aircraft fell through. At that time the Imperial Army had other priorities and the finances were not available for the project. Two German-made Taube trainers were purchased by agents of the Revolutionary forces during the 1911 Revolution and these were delivered in 1912.

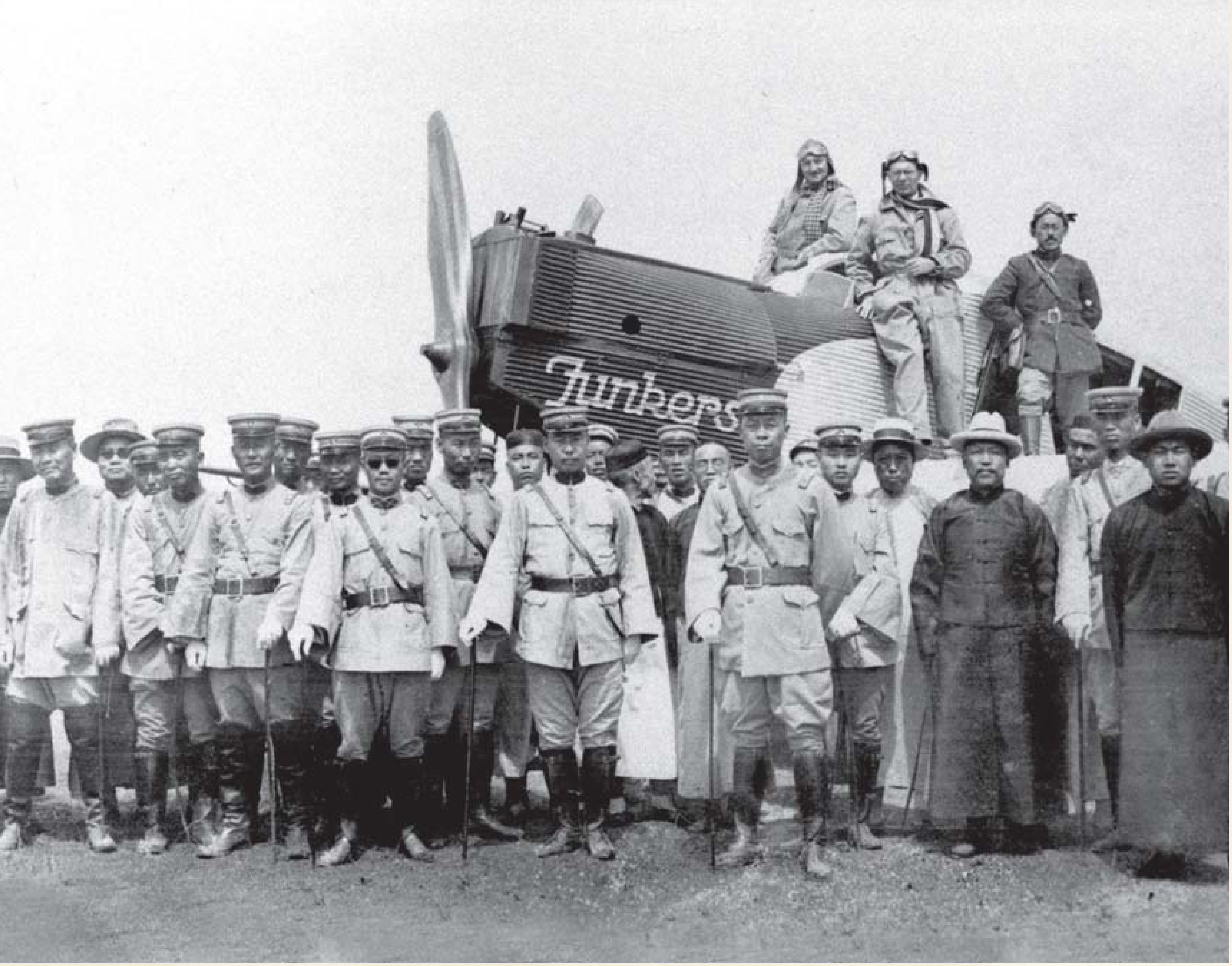
After 1913 the new Republican Air Arm was established. By 1920 it had training schools established and French Caudron trainers, British Avro 504K trainers as well as Handley Page 0/7 and Vickers Vimy passenger planes were in service. By the early 1920s these aircraft were split between the various warring factions and warlord cliques and individual warlords tried to establish their own air arms.

By 1924 there were approximately 170 aircraft flying for these various armies in China with sometimes each army possessing just one or two aircraft. By the end of the Northern Expedition in 1928, the number of aircraft involved in the fighting in China had risen to 240. The largest air arms in the 1910s and 1920s belonged, not surprisingly, to the main warlord cliques like the Fengtien and Chihli. The Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien air force was the largest during the 1920s with approximately 100 aircraft. These included a fleet of modern French Breguet – 14, light bombers flown by a mixture of Chinese and foreign pilots. Chang employed about 15 foreign pilots which included 12 White Russians and he also had Chinese pilots who had received very basic training.

Wu Pei-fu's Chihli air force was never as strong as that of his rival Chang Tso-lin but he did buy aircraft from the USA in 1923 and also had Italian aircraft including the Ansaldo A30 light bombers. The 'Christian warlord' Feng Yu-hsiang set up an air corps in 1924 and had 12 Italian Ansaldo SVA-5 fighter bombers as well as three R-1 light bombers supplied by the Soviet Union which took part in the fighting of 1925. Yen Hsi-shan, the Shansi warlord or 'Model Governor', established a small air force in 1927 with two German Junkers transport planes, a F13 and a A35. He employed Japanese instructors to train his own pilots while at the same time flying the planes for him. Other warlord users of aircraft included Ca'o Kun, who bought ten aircraft from a French agent in Shanghai in 1922; and General Ch'en Chiung-ming, the Kwangtung warlord, who employed three US pilots to fly for his air arm for a few months. The Chekiang warlord Lu Yung-hsiang reportedly had six Breguet 14As, two Morane-Saulnier monoplanes and two Morane-Saulnier 'penguins'. The effectiveness of aircraft in Chinese warlord warfare is debatable with so few planes available in comparison to the armies involved. Air to air combat rarely took place and most combat use of aircraft was in reconnaissance missions or bombing or strafing enemy positions.

The first recorded military use of aircraft in China took place in 1917 during the attempted restoration of the emperor in Peking. A Republican Caudron bombed the Imperial troops' positions in the Forbidden City, killing three of their troops. Most bombing missions in the 1911–28 period did little damage to the troops on the ground as pilots flew too high. General Feng Yu-hsiang told his men during a attack by Fengtien aircraft that they were as likely to be hit by enemy aircraft as they were to be hit by 'bird droppings'. On another occasion Fengtien aircraft only managed to kill five enemy troops and destroy two trees over eight days of bombing. They also managed to damage an hotel but in the course of their raids had two aircraft shot down. A shortage of bombs for many of the aircraft was also a problem, although Chang Tso-lin manufactured some in his arsenal. One rather comic example of improvization occurred during the Kwangsi Army's retreat from Kwangtung province in 1920. The Kwangsi troops were subjected to an unusual aerial bombardment by Cantonese aircraft which was run on a very limited budget. With no bombs available the pilots had to improvise by throwing wooden blocks at the enemy. It was not reported whether these 'bombs' caused any casualties but they would have had to score a direct hit on a soldier to do any damage. During the major conflicts between the warlords, and then with the National Revolutionary Army, large-scale raids did occur. However, even raids by the large bomber forces of the Fengtien and Ankuochun armies in the late 1920s did not affect the outcome of a battle or campaign.

This German-made Junkers F-13 light transport plane is one of the small fleet of aircraft from General Yen Hsi-shan's Shansi air force. It arrived in Shansi along with a German mercenary pilot and was joined later by a Junkers A-20 and two Breguet-14 light bombers bought in 1925, as well as two locally built Schoettler aircraft: a B3 and an S4.



Chiang Kai-shek, wearing the Nationalist officers' uniform, poses with his horse at the time of the Northern Expedition in 1928. He had successfully welded together an alliance of Nationalist Whampoa Academy cadets and ex-warlord troops into the National Revolutionary Army. His achievements in defeating the powerful northern warlords are often overlooked because of his final defeat by the Communists in 1949.

established a strong government in opposition to Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang. On 3 June Marshal Chang Tso-lin boarded a special train to return to his headquarters at Mukden. As his train crossed a bridge on the outskirts of Mukden it was blown up by a bomb planted by Japanese agents. The Japanese who had supported Chang for many years wanted to create a power vacuum in Manchuria. Their hope was that with Chang dead his 'opium addicted' son Chang Hsueh-liang would allow them to take over Manchuria. Chang Hsueh-liang did not react in the way that the Japanese expected and instead reached an agreement with Chiang Kai-shek. Within a few months Chang and his troops were absorbed into the National Revolutionary Army although until 1931 he ruled Manchuria as an almost independent state. With the capture of Peking in June, the Northern Expedition had effectively achieved its goals.

At the end of the Northern Expedition the NRA had grown to huge proportions. A US report of February 1929 gave the total men under arms in the NRA at an enormous 1,620,000. This total was made up of Chiang Kai-shek's 1st Group Army with 240,000 men, Feng Yu-hsiang's 2nd Group Army with 220,000, Yen His-an's 3rd Group Army with 200,000 and the 4th Group Army of Kwangsi Clique troops with 230,000 men. The former Fengtien Army, under the command of Chang Hsueh-liang, had recently joined the NRA with 190,000 men. This estimate for the ex-Fengtien contingent is a little low as Chang is supposed to have inherited about 400,000 men from his father Chang Tso-lin. Other components of the 1929 NRA were made up of 30,000 soldiers of the Yunnan Army and 540,000 former warlords' troops scattered throughout southern and central China. This number of troops was unsustainable and disbandment conferences during 1929 were intended to work out a formula for reducing the size of the new Nationalist Army.

Chiang Kai-shek was named the new president of the Nationalist government of China in November 1928 and the country was – at least in theory – united. In reality there were still many challenges, both internal and external, that would soon show that China was far from unified.

THE BIRTH OF THE RED ARMY 1927–30

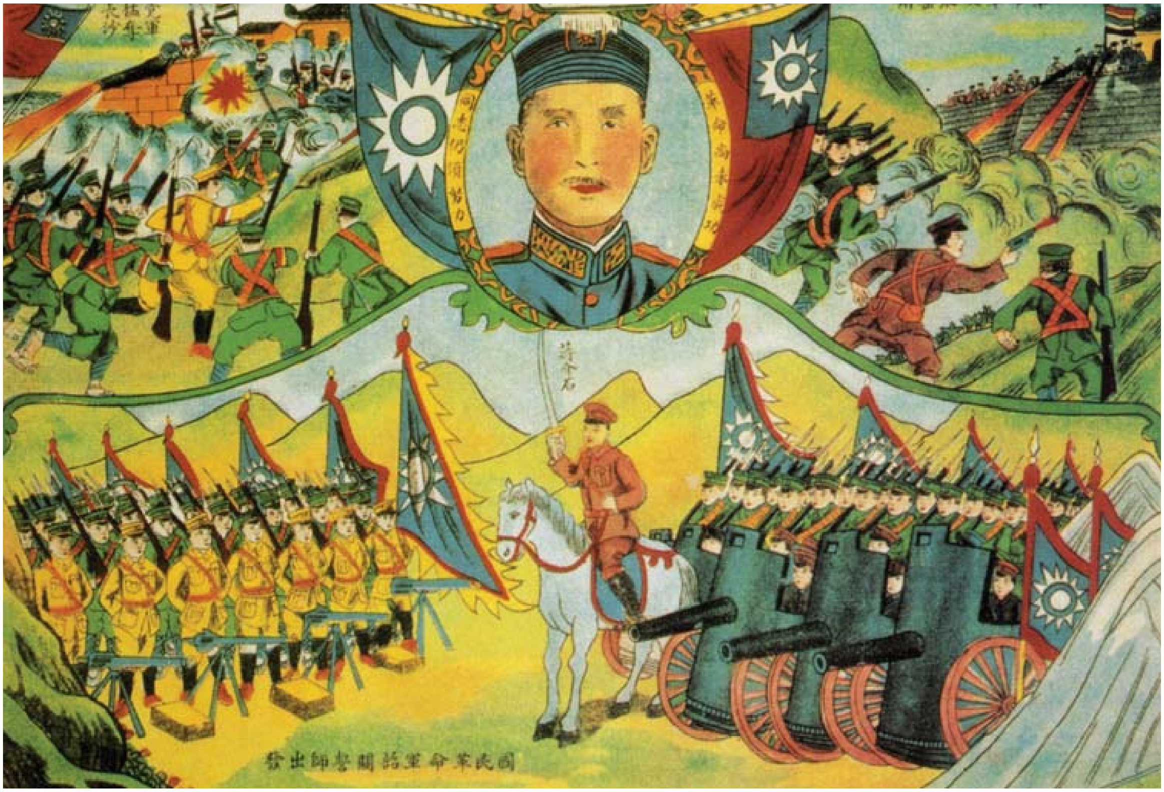
The long road to the Chinese Communists achieving power began in June 1927 when the Comintern in Moscow issued instructions to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). They were to set up their own army by recruiting 20,000 peasants in Hunan and Hupei provinces. This new force was to be made up of several corps, although how this was to be achieved was not made clear by the Comitern. Only one organized military force could be counted on by the Communists and that was the 2nd Group Army of the National Revolutionary Army. The 2nd Army had fought well during the Northern Expedition and had earned its nickname of the 'Iron Army'. Although the 2nd Army had a large number of pro-Communist soldiers in its ranks its commander, General Chang Fa-k'uei, was not in sympathy with their cause.

In late July 1927, the 24th Division of the 2nd Group Army had moved into the city of Nanchang. Two of the division's regiments had a majority of Communists in their ranks and these were to be used to launch a *coup d'état* to take over the city. Also in Nanchang were two important Communist officers of the NRA, General Chu Teh was chief of Public Security and had a few companies of loyal Communists under this command. His young colleague who had been political officer at the Whampoa Military Academy before 1926 was Chou En-lai who was now in command of the provincial military academy.

In July some units of the 2nd Army did break away from their right-wing comrades and formed a 'Red' army, and on 1 August the Communists in Nanchang including Chu and Chou proclaimed the formation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The new PLA was composed of two regiments of the 24th NRA Division, and 4,000 men of the poorly armed and trained 20th Army.

On 1 August, the PLA began their planned coup which was almost immediately put down by Chang Fa-ku'ei and his non-Communist troops. With no popular rising in evidence and the civilian population disinterested in the Communist cause, the new PLA troops withdrew from the city. They marched in the general direction of the city of Swatow in Kwangtung province having attacked the town of Hiuch'ang on 24 August. After a 500-mile march which involved several battles with NRA troops, the 5,000–6,000 men of the PLA arrived in Swatow on 24 September. With only about 2,000 of their men armed, the Communists were not in a position to resist the approaching NRA. They withdrew from the city on 30 September and headed out into the countryside to continue the struggle. Their exploits had not provoked the popular uprising that they had expected and they now had to simply survive against units of NRA troops loyal to Chiang Kai-shek.

In August 1927 Mao had been ordered by the Chinese Communist Party to prepare a military force to launch an uprising centred on the cities of Hupei province. This so-called Autumn Harvest Uprising was – as Mao realized – doomed to failure with so few arms and volunteers available. He decided instead to take the few men he had raised and withdraw to the relative safety of the Ching Kang Shang mountainous region. There he set up the Communists' first rural base where he hoped to build a viable Red Army to take on the Nationalists at a later date.



This Nationalist propaganda picture from the time of the Northern Expedition shows the forces of the National Revolutionary Army arrayed below the portrait of Sun Yat-sen. Chiang Kai-shek is seen below his former leader on horseback with his troops around him. The rest of the picture shows NRA troops attacking positions held by troops of the northern warlords flying the five-barred flag.

Communist morale was further hit a few months later by the failed attempt to take over Canton by a workers' 'Red Guard' militia of 20,000 poorly-armed men. Although only 2,000 of the Communists had rifles, they successfully took over most of the city. The 'Canton Commune' was established on 11 December, but it only lasted three days before being put down by 15,000 pro-Chiang troops. Casualties were heavy on both sides but in the aftermath at least 5,000 Communists were massacred.

This and other urban uprisings organized by the Communists in 1927 led Mao Tse-tung to voice his unease. As far as Mao was concerned, the Russian example of revolution would simply not work. In Russia, the industrial workers had been regarded as pro-revolutionary and the land-owning peasant had often been regarded as the enemy. In China, 90 per cent of the population were peasants working on the land. Mao felt that rural not urban revolts were the answer – he estimated that although it might take longer the ordinary peasants were the key to the revolution rather than the industrial worker. Mao's views on the rural future of the revolution was not shared by many in the Communist

Soldiers of the National Revolutionary Army stand guard outside a government building in a newly 'liberated' city during the Northern Expedition. As the expedition progressed the NRA was welded into a battle-hardened force which often overcame larger northern armies. These men are carrying most of their kit on their backs, one man has an umbrella sticking out of his back pack.

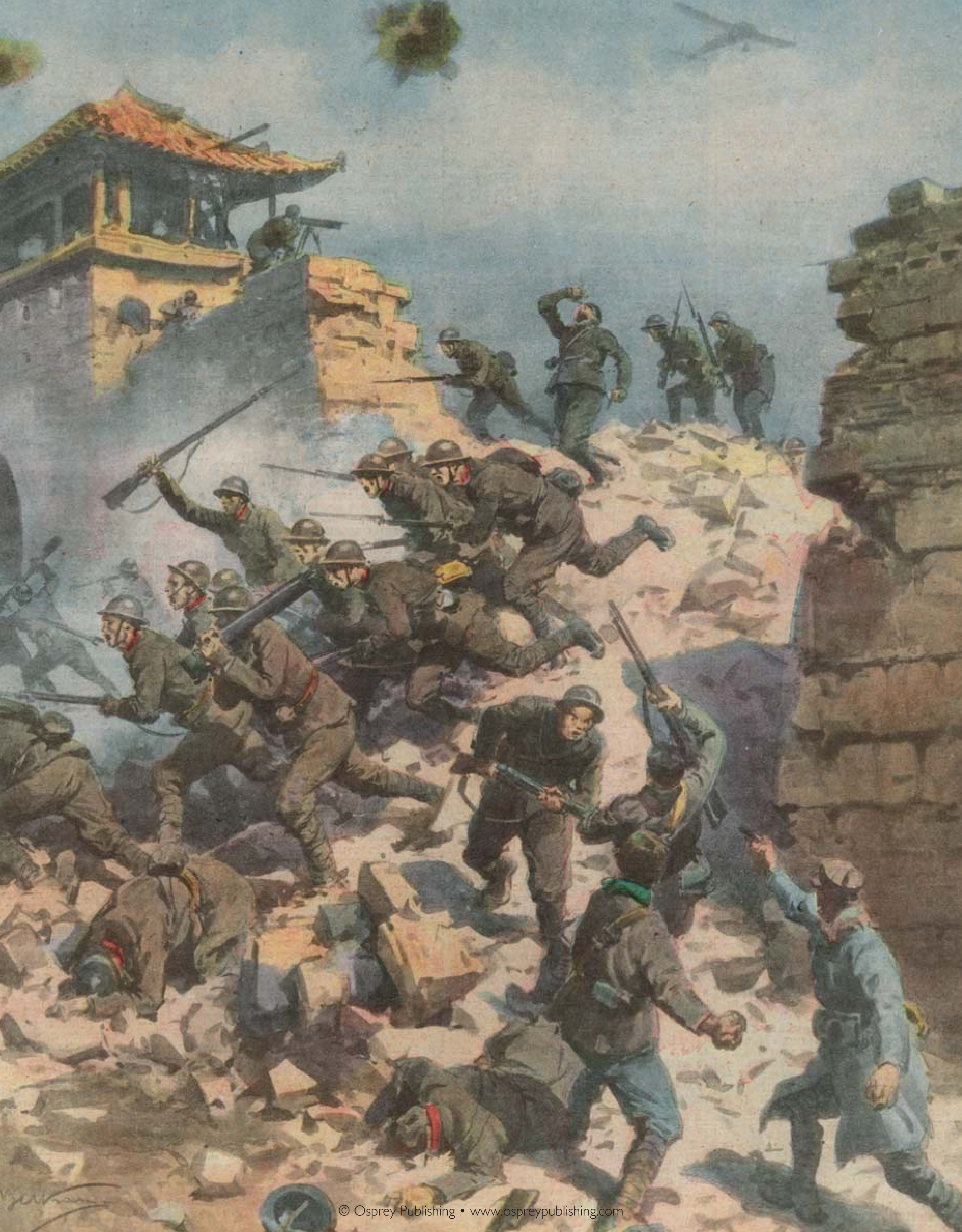
leadership. They wanted to persist in the idea of starting the revolution in the cities and then spreading it to the countryside. Using the Bolsheviks in Russia as their example, they believed that this was the only way to revolutionize China.

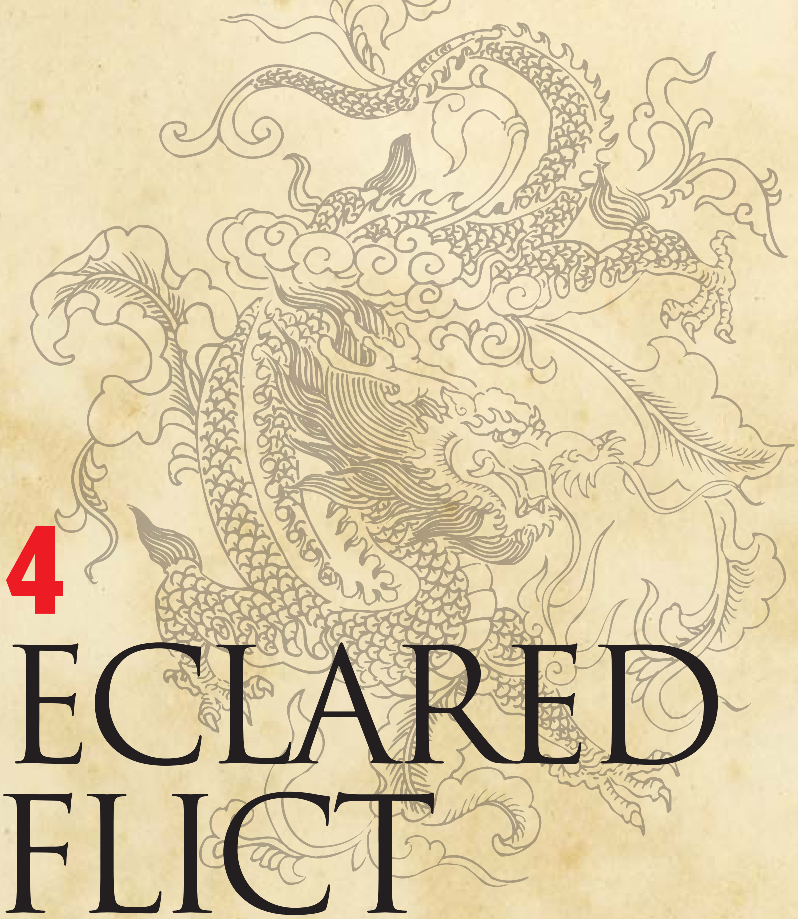
With so much opposition to his ideas, Mao decided to take a few hundred of his followers into the Chingkangchan mountains. There he formed the nucleus of the Red Army with a group of half-starved and half-clothed men with a few hundred old rifles between them. His men had to remain constantly on the move to avoid the NRA patrols. Mao was joined in 1928 by another Communist guerrilla leader Chu Teh who brought with enough men to expand the army to several thousand.

They wandered around southern China for over a year before finally setting up a 'soviet' or base in a remote region of Kiangsi province. There they began to organize a 'model' state known as the Kiangsi Soviet and immediately took land from the unpopular landlords and gave it to the peasants. They set up committees to make decisions, reduced taxation and abolished several unpopular laws like compulsory arranged marriages. Education was introduced for everyone and people began to arrive from outside the soviet, attracted by the liberal regime. Eventually the survivors of the old Communist leadership who had been hiding in Shanghai after the April 1927 massacres arrived in Kiangsi. They accepted Mao's ideas as party policy having seen his ideas successfully spread with the setting up of several other soviets in remote areas.

When Mao had arrived in Kiangsi he set up a military force to defend the newly organized Soviet. In typical Mao fashion he gave it a name which signalled his intentions to build upon it calling it the 1st Regiment, 1st Division, 1st Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army. In May 1928 another communist force, the 4th Red Army, was formed and was popularly known as the 'Chu-Mao' Army with Chu Teh as the unit's military commander and Mao Tse-tung as its political commissar. The army was largely filled with deserters from the ranks of the Hunan warlord, General Ho Chien. Shortly afterwards a 5th Red Army was raised under the command of P'eng Te-huai and, like the 4th, was poorly armed with only about 65 per cent of its few thousand men having any rifles. Some firearms were acquired by making attacks against the troops of the Kiangsi warlord Chu Pei-teh.

In the early days of the 4th Army, Chu and Mao managed to expand the territory under their control and built their military forces up. This was mainly achieved by taking on the poorly trained local forces of the former warlords who now were officially under the Nationalist government. After just over a year the pressure began to build up against the 4th Army as more Nationalist troops were sent to the region. By the winter of 1929 this pressure forced the 4th to leave their headquarters at Chingkongshan and move into Fukien province where they set up their new base in December. In 1930 the Red armies were re-organized into four army corps with the 1st under the command of Chu Teh, the 2nd under Ho Lung, the 3rd under P'eng Te-huai and the 4th under Hsu Hsiang-ch'ien. The central committee of the CCP who had ordered this re-organization then told the commanders to prepare for an all-out offensive against the cities of Changsha, Nanchang and Wuchang. Although the field commanders knew that attacks by poorly armed troops against well-defended cities were bound to fail, they obeyed their instructions. Attacks were made against all three cities but only one was successful when the 3rd Army Corps took Changsha on 28 July. The other attacks were defeated with the Communists suffering heavy casualties, and after ten days the 3rd Corps also had to withdraw from Changsha. Chiang Kai-shek reacted to these attacks with anger and immediately put plans in place for the destruction of the Communists with the first of a series of extermination campaigns against them.





CHAPTER 4

UNDECLARED CONFLICT

1928–37

The victory of the Northern Expedition and the defeat of the northern warlords by the end of 1928 did not bring the expected peace to China. For the next nine years the new Nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek was to face challenges from many quarters. Any stability that the Chinese people might have hoped for under Nationalist rule was to be constantly threatened. Unity created amongst the military and politicians by the desire to rid China of the warlords proved to be only skin deep. Chiang and the Nationalists would try, usually through military force, to further unite the country. Other influences both inside China and from outside the country would make their task difficult if not impossible.

Opposite page
A front-page illustration from an Italian newspaper's illustrated supplement shows a Japanese attack on Chinese positions on the Great Wall in 1933. The fighting in the Great Wall region was one-sided with the Chinese defenders having little support from the government in Nanking. Here, in this romanticized version of events, Japanese troops burst through a breach in the wall to be faced by a few Chinese irregulars.

THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY ARMY 1928–31

In 1929 the National Revolutionary Army, although victorious in its Northern Expedition, was a divided force. Although there were an estimated 1,620,000 men in the NRA, many belonged to armies which had little or no loyalty to Chiang Kai-shek. While the Northern Expedition was in its latter stages the NRA had more or less remained united and the expulsion of the Communists in 1927 had meant that most of the remaining component parts of the NRA were politically similar. But regional differences were once again to come to the fore. The sheer size of the NRA was a major problem for Chiang Kai-shek and the new government as it was simply unaffordable. Chiang was reluctant to spend the crippled Chinese economies on military forces of disputable loyalty.

A disbandment policy was quickly instituted in 1929 to reduce this force to a 65-division army with each division consisting of 11,000 men. Naturally this reduction in numbers was intended to affect the less loyal formations more than those loyal to Chiang. Obviously former warlords who saw that their armies were to be much reduced under the policy were angry and ready to revolt. The NRA would spend the next three years fighting a series of war against both internal and external enemies, beginning with wars against the Soviet Union in Manchuria in 1929 and the start of conflicts with rebellious cliques within the NRA in 1929–30. This series of wars was to end with the humiliating Japanese invasion of

A Nationalist artillery battery fires their mountain guns during the period of the Great Plains War of 1930. The fighting between Chiang Kai-shek's troops and those of several rebellious commanders was costly for both sides. Chiang's victory over the rebels finally united China at least for the time being under one government.

Manchuria in 1931. The National Revolutionary Army during this period was to remain a basic infantry force with little artillery and a few tanks and other armoured vehicles. Arms shipments ordered by Chiang after his victory in 1928 began to arrive but not in the quantities necessary to change the face of the NRA. So in the late 1920s and early 1930s it was a largely unchanged National Revolutionary Army which had to face its many challenges.

THE SINO-SOVIET WAR

The victory of the National Revolutionary Army in 1928 created problems for the Soviet Union. Having broken with the Soviets after the events of 1927, the NRA was now seen by the Russians as a potential threat to their Siberian border. A particular worry for the Russians was the status of their joint ownership of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) which ran through Manchuria. The CER, which had been built during the days of the last tsar, had a great strategic importance to the Soviet Union as the railway ended at the Siberian port of Vladivostok. Russia would not stand for any interference with the line which carried supplies to and from this vital Russian port.

At this point the ‘Young Marshal’ Chang Hsueh-liang was in control of Manchuria, with troops totalling approximately 300,000 men. Chang had decided to join his substantial forces with Chiang Kai-shek after the assassination of his father Chang Tso-lin by the Japanese in 1928. Chang Hsueh-liang had always resented the Soviet concessions in Manchuria and consulted with Chiang Kai-shek about taking military action to remove them. Skirmishes began in May 1929, and in July Chang massed his forces on the Manchurian–Soviet border. At the same time his troops seized control of the CER and expelled all of the railway’s 174 Russian workers.

The Soviet Union was not intimidated by the large Chinese presence near their border and were certainly not prepared to lose control of the railway. Funds were released by the Soviet government to create a 100,000-strong ‘Special Far Eastern Army’ under the command of Russian Civil War hero, Vasily K. Blyukher. From this army a 18,000-strong force of six rifle divisions and two cavalry brigades was moved up to the border. Chinese cavalry had already raided across the border so the Soviet Union felt even more justified in taking military action. On 12 October their

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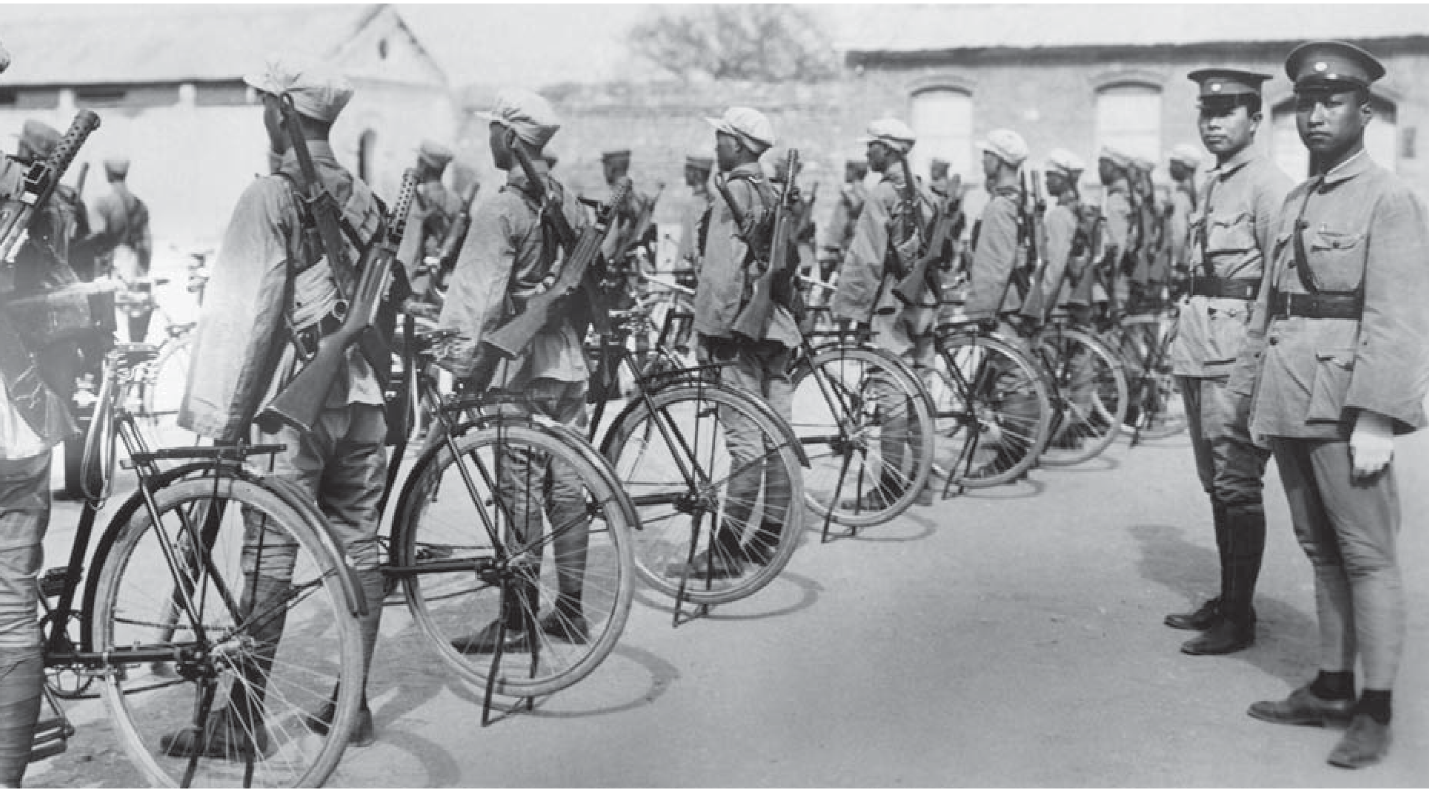
troops crossed the border and attacked the Chinese headquarters at the town of Fukdin on the 31st. They took the town a few days later and inflicted heavy losses on Chang Hsueh-liang's troops. The Chinese had stationed a 40,000-strong force along the CER and the Soviet troops now attacked them. Three Soviet divisions, backed by tanks, aircraft and heavy artillery, then attacked the town of Chalainor which was defended by 7,000 Chinese troops. Its defenders were routed and only 1,000 of the garrison managed to escape from the town's ruins. The Soviets followed up this attack by taking the city of Manchouli and 8,000 Chinese prisoners including the 17th Heilongjiang Brigade. The brigade was considered by Chiang Kai-shek as one of the best units in the Nationalist Army. Fighting continued throughout November with the Young Marshal's troops crossing the border on several occasions in an attempt to draw the Soviet troops out of Manchuria. Soviet forces continued to defeat formations of Chinese troops and take a number of towns along the railway including the city of Hailar. Negotiations between the now demoralized Chinese and the Soviets began in late November but the fighting continued.

Both armies used tanks during the war but Chang's FT-17 light tanks never encountered the Soviet Army's MS-1 light tanks as they were on different sectors of the front. The MS-1 was a slight modified version of the FT-17, a number of which had been captured by the Soviets during the Russian Civil War a few years before. There were also naval encounters on the Sungari River during the war, in which the Chinese lost seven of their river patrol ships. The Chinese were now forced to accept all of the Soviet conditions for a cessation of hostilities, including the reinstatement of Soviet rights over the CER. Official Soviet losses were reported to be 143 killed, 665 wounded and four missing in action, particularly low figures given the ferocity of the fighting. Chinese official losses were 2,000 killed and 1,000 wounded with 8,550 prisoners taken, and they also lost most of their heavy weaponry. The casualties suffered by both the Chinese and the Soviet Army were most likely higher than the official figures.

Opposite page
Soldiers of the National Revolutionary Army clamber aboard a freight train during one of several campaigns fought in the late 1920s against rebel factions. The victory against the northern warlords in 1928 did not bring the expected peace as former allies fell out amongst themselves. Chiang's final victory against his rebel commanders in the Great Plains War of 1930 would allow him to attack his main enemy: the Communists.

THE CENTRAL PLAINS WAR

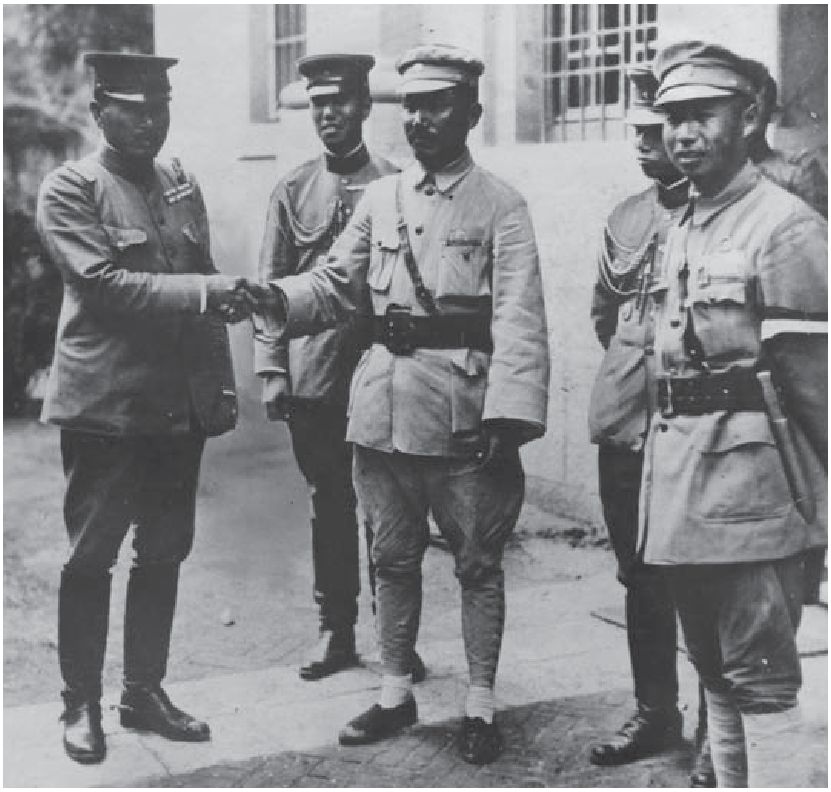
After the defeat of the northern warlords in 1928–29, Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Army still had to consolidate the rule of the Kuomintang government. During the Northern Expedition the National Revolutionary Army had been joined by the armies of the Kuominchun



Nationalist bicycle troops armed with sub-machine guns prepare to leave Peking to take up positions in Shantung province which have been vacated by the Japanese Imperial Army. These soldiers are typical of the recently victorious Nationalist Army which was attempting to modernize during the 1928–31 period. Chiang Kai-shek had ordered large amounts of modern weaponry after 1928 but by the early 1930s the army was still waiting for most of the tanks, artillery and aircraft they needed. (Corbis)

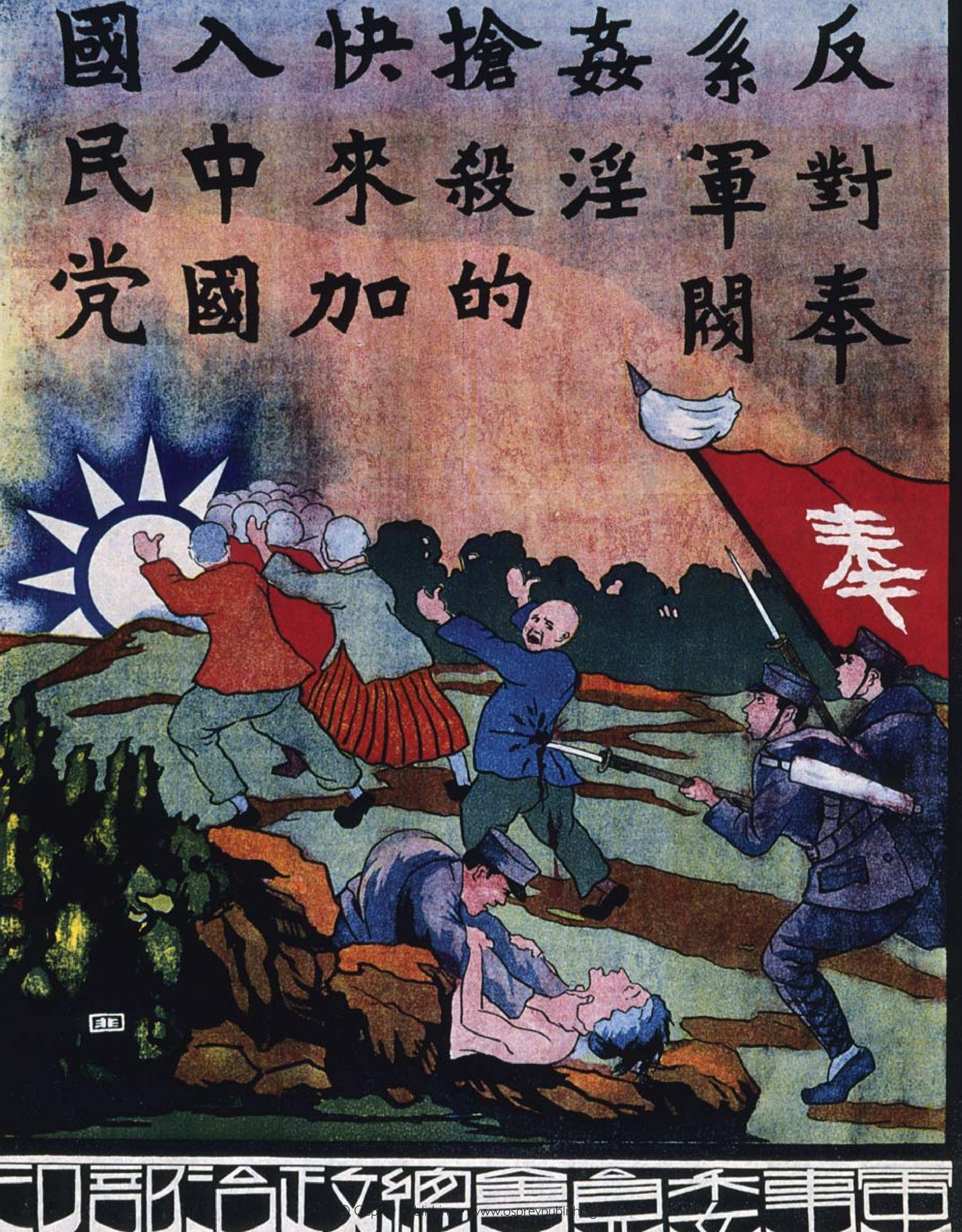
under Feng Yu-hsiang, and the 'Shansi Army' of Yen Hsi-shan. Chang Hsueh-liang and his former Fengtien troops had then joined the NRA in December 1928. The 1929 policy to disband some of the NRA's troops was bound to cause problems amongst the various warlords particularly as those like Yen and Feng were unhappy that they were to lose many of their units when a latecomer like Chang Hsueh-liang kept most of his divisions. Chiang knew that he would have to break the military power of the less loyal warlords like Feng or risk losing control of China itself.

The Kwangsi warlords in the south of China, who had never been wholehearted supporters of Chiang, were the first to break off relations. Kwangsi troops started military operations against the NRA in early 1929 and effectively started the conflict known as the 'Great Plains War'. A 60,000-strong Kwangsi Army attempted to install a pro-Kwangsi man into the role of governor of the tri-city region of Wuhan by force in March 1929. This attempt was met by a force of 100,000 sent by Chiang who employed bribery to ensure that 5,000 of the troops defending Wuhan switched sides. In May 1929 Feng Yu-hsiang also fell out with Chiang and



Nationalist General Fang Chen-wu shakes hands with Japanese General Saito at Tsinan in Shantung province. The photograph taken in June 1930 when the Nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek were fighting against the various rebel armies during the Great Plains War. General Fang had been forced to assure the Japanese that the fighting between his troops and those of the Shansi general, Yen Hsi-shan, would not clash in the city and endanger Japanese lives.

began to prepare for war with his former commander. During the rest of 1929 an anti-Chiang Kai-shek coalition gradually formed around Feng and a number of anti-Chiang politicians like Wang Ching-wei. The rebels were joined in February 1930 by the Shansi warlord Yen Hsi-shan who was chosen to head the military forces of the alliance. Feng was named as one of his deputies, as was Chang Hsueh-liang in an attempt to bring him to their side. Chang Hsueh-liang was an uncommitted member of the rebels and his eventual decision to remain loyal to Chiang decided the result of the conflict. Huge numbers of troops were committed by both sides with the Li–Feng–Yen alliance having on paper about 800,000 men and the NRA having about 600,000 men. In reality, about half of these troops were committed to the fighting by the NRA with the rebel forces involved numbering about 600,000. After the ill-fated attempt by Li Tsung-jen, the Kwangsi general, to invade Hunan province and attack Wuhan the other rebels acted. Feng led his Kuominchun Army into Shantung province and Yen led his Shansi Army towards Nanking. Fighting began in May 1930 and the NRA launched counter-offensives


反對奉系軍閥姦淫搶殺的
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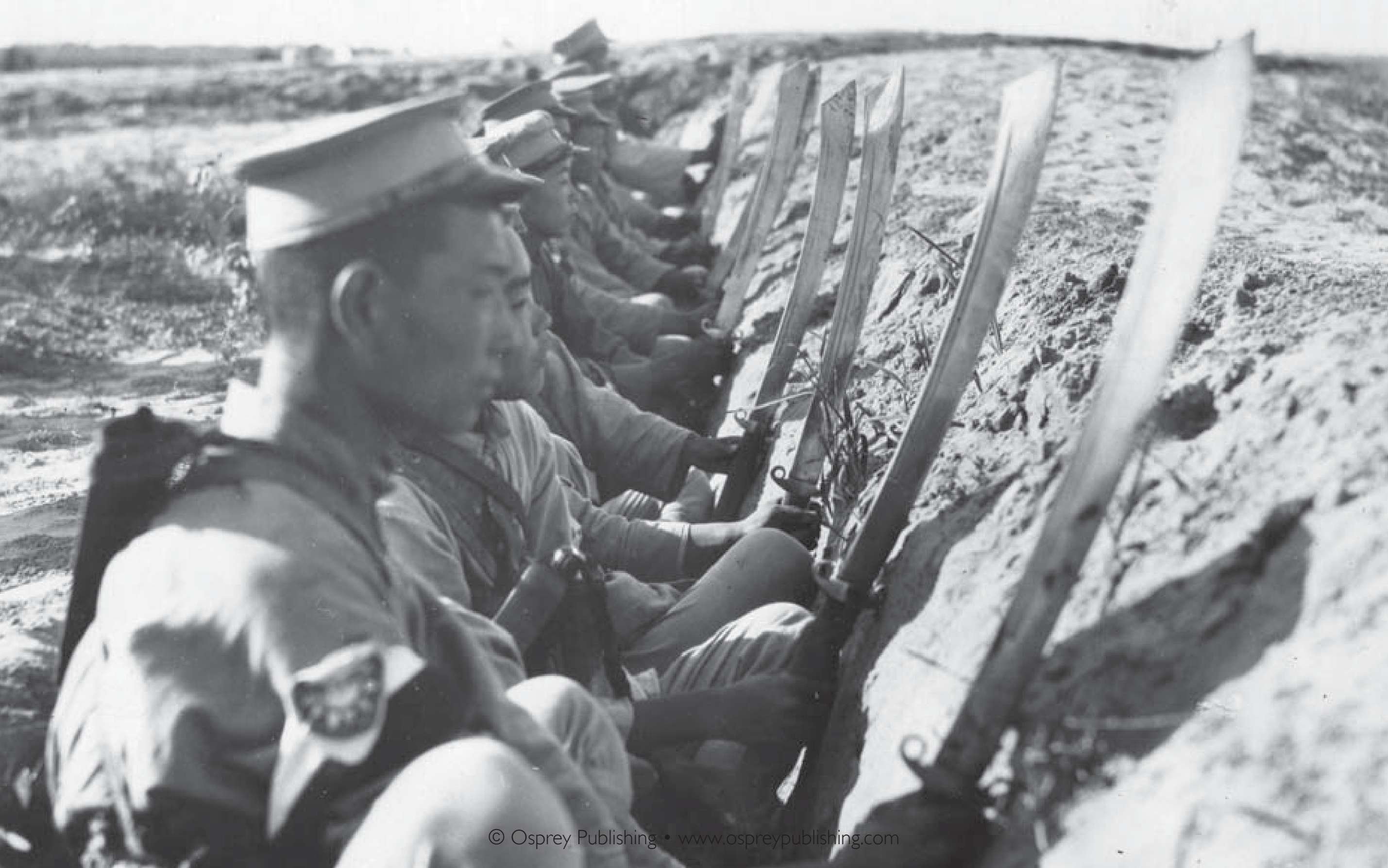
backed by their large air force. Feng and his Kuominchun destroyed the Nationalist armies sent against him in fighting in Kansu province. The Kuominchun's success was not, however, followed up as the Shansi Army was unwilling or unable to support them. Without support, Feng's Kuominchun went on the defensive and waited for the arrival of the Shansi Army. When the Shansi Army arrived at the front a joint offensive was immediately launched. The fighting was heavy and as the fate of China hung in the balance losses on both sides climbed to 200,000. The fighting on the northern front gradually petered out as the superior weaponry of the NRA began to tell. In a series of set-piece battles fought through the winter of 1929–30, mainly along China's railway system, the better-armed and supplied NRA began to wear their enemies down. There were reports of the use of poison gas by the NRA, although these attacks proved unsuccessful as the gas was blown back into the faces of the Nationalist Army troops. In the south of China the fighting was shorter-lived with the Kwangsi Army being outmanoeuvred by Chiang's generals. Li Tsung-jen decided to withdraw back into Kwangsi province with as much of his army as intact as possible and wait for any NRA offensive. Finally admitting defeat, the Kwangsi leadership went into exile in Hong Kong, until recalled by Chiang to fight the Japanese.

In Shantung the Shansi Army captured the city of Tsinan in June 1930 but NRA troops released by their victories in the south now joined their comrades in Shantung and Tsinan was regained in August. The NRA then moved large numbers of troops into the Kansu and Shansi provinces to defeat Feng and Yen. At this important point the Young Marshal finally announced his full support for Chiang Kai-shek. The former Fengtien Army, now known as the North-East Army, entered the war under the Young Marshal's command and swung the balance in Chiang's favour. The coalition between Yen and Feng fell apart and the Shansi Army withdrew from the fighting while the Kuominchun was defeated on the battlefield. Both Yen and Feng admitted defeat by announcing their retirement on 4 November and the threat to Chiang and his rule over China was removed. The casualties during the war were disputed with the NRA claiming to have inflicted 150,000 losses on the rebels while losing only 30,000 dead and 60,000 wounded. An overall figure of 300,000 dead on both sides is generally accepted as a reasonable estimate of military losses. As usual, however, the real cost was borne by the civilian population in the fighting zone who had vainly hoped that the end of the Northern Expedition had brought peace to China.

Opposite page
A Nationalist propaganda poster of 1930 shows the devastation wrought by the forces of Marshal Feng Yu-hsiang during the 1929–30 Great Plains War. The brutalized civilians run towards the protection offered by the distant white sun of the Kuomintang Nationalist Party. On the red flag of Feng's troops is the single white character of their commanding officer's name.

JAPAN'S INVASION OF MANCHURIA

Japan had not given up its plans to gain control in Manchuria after its attempts to woo Chang Hsueh-liang in 1928 failed. The Kwangtung Army in Manchuria was prepared to act independently of the Japanese government to achieve this goal. The Kwangtung Army commander, General Shigeru Honjo, ignored orders from the Tokyo Government to keep the fighting localized. Instead, like other Japanese commanders in China during the 1930s, his ambitions for his own command led him to order his troops to expand their operations throughout Manchuria. On 18 September 1931 part of the South Manchurian Railway at Mukden was blown up. As this section of the track was owned by Japan accusations were immediately made against Chinese troops in the area. In fact the incident had been staged by the Japanese to give them an excuse to begin military operations in the region. This was simply the start of a carefully planned operation to ensure the military take-over of the three provinces of Manchuria. Under instructions from Chiang Kai-shek, Chang Hsueh-liang did not resist the Japanese advance. Instead he withdrew his better units ahead of the Japanese advance while others simply melted into the countryside. The Chinese forces in Manchuria at the time of the

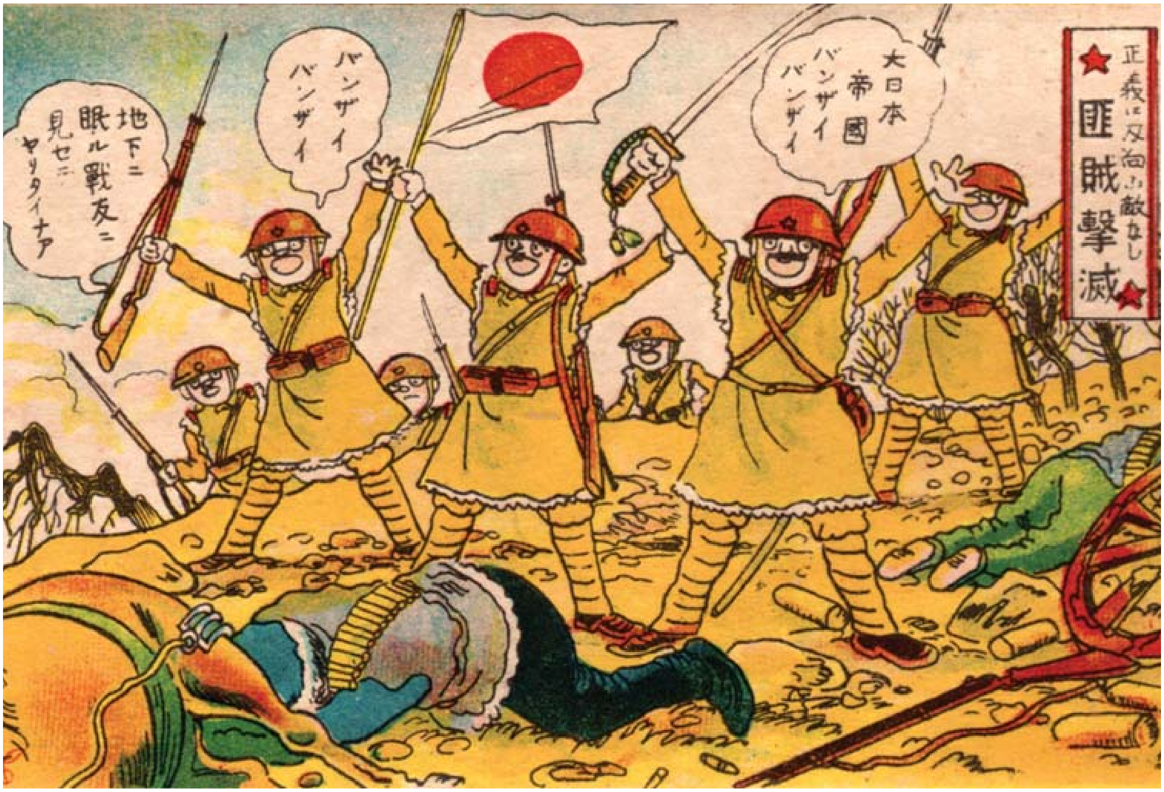


Young Nationalist troops prepare to go over the top fighting the Japanese in 1932 armed with nothing but their swords. The da-dao sword was deadly at close quarters and the men would have had plenty of training in its use. However charging across open ground with nothing but a sword was more often than not a suicidal mission.

Japanese railway protection soldiers wearing their winter uniforms stand for inspection at the side of their camouflaged armoured train in Manchuria in 1932. The railways were vital to the Japanese Army's control of the newly conquered region with isolated garrisons relying on them to bring in supplies. Armoured plated, these trains were armed with heavy and light artillery pieces and numerous machine guns.

invasion had totalled approximately 160,000 men. Chang Hsueh-liang had his own personal army of 50,000 men with 10,000 stationed in the capital Mukden. General Chang Tso-hsiang, the old Fengtien commander who had served as deputy commander-in-chief of the North-East Frontier Defence Forces since 1928, had 80,000 troops in Kirin province. General Wu Fu-lin's army had 30,000 men stationed in Heilongjiang province but he was in Peking when the Japanese invaded and was replaced in the field by General Ma Chang-shan. Chiang was convinced that if his troops did not resist the take-over then international pressure would be brought to bear against the Japanese as the aggressors to withdraw their forces.

His plan completely backfired when by February 1932 the 30,000-strong Japanese Kwangtung Army, reinforced with a few small units, had completely taken over Manchuria and re-named the three provinces as 'Manchukuo' – land of the Manchus. They then installed the last emperor of China, Pu Yi, as chief executive of the new government with a view to elevating him in future to emperor. Nonetheless, Manchukuo was never intended to be anything more than a client or 'puppet' state under the total control of the Japanese Kwangtung Army. Many of the Young Marshal's soldiers had surrendered to the Japanese and some were now used by the Japanese to form the new state's army.

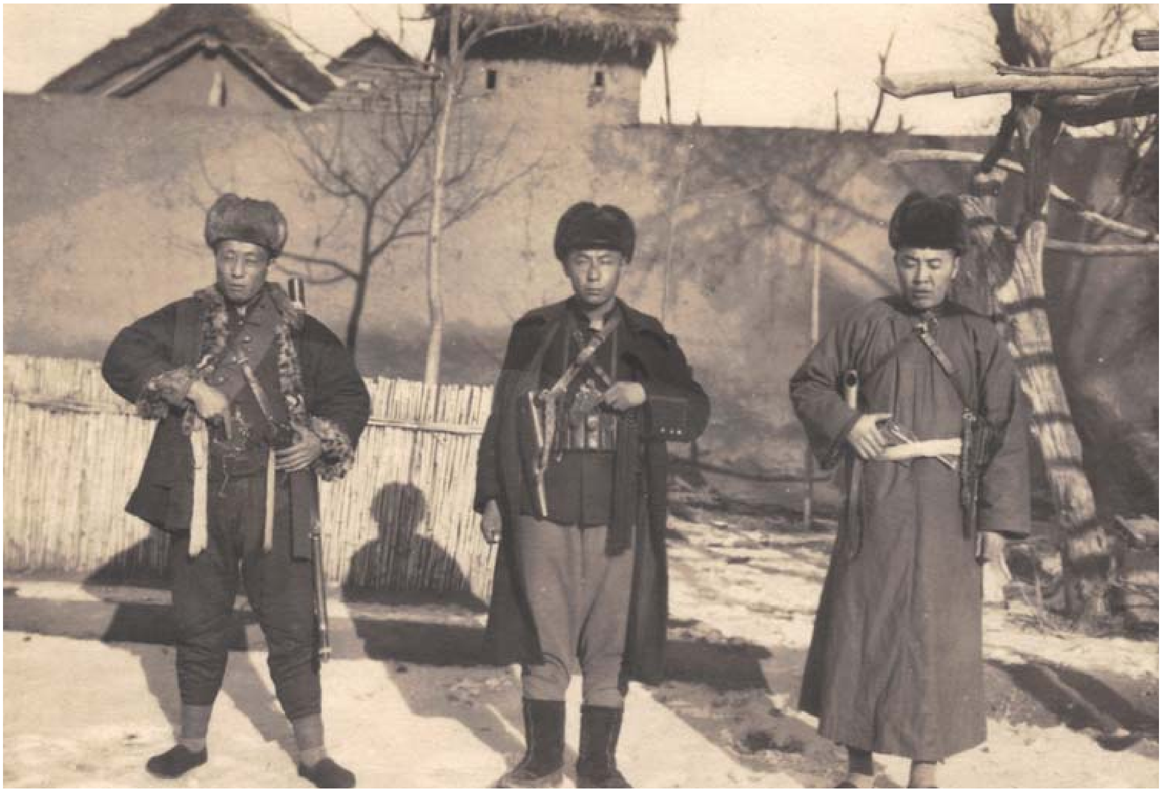

正義に刃向ふ敵なし
匪賊撃滅
大日本帝國バンザイバンザイ
バンザイバンザイ
地下ニ眠ル戦友ニ見セニヤリタイナア

This Japanese propaganda postcard is one of a comic series produced during the early to mid-1930s for soldiers to send home to their family. In this one the Japanese troops are performing a Banzai celebration after defeating the Manchurian irregulars whose bodies lie around their feet. Postcards like this neatly sum up the Japanese attitude to the war in China, which was seen as an adventure by many in Japan.

International outrage at the behaviour of the Japanese and their complete disregard for several agreements with China led to action by the League of Nations. The Chinese had represented their case well at the League and this led to the setting up of a commission under the British diplomat Lord Lytton. Unsurprisingly, Lytton found that Japan had been the aggressor and that there was no popular feeling in Manchuria for independence from the rest of China. Even though the Japanese government had initially been taken by surprise by the actions of the Kwangtung Army they now fully supported the take-over of Manchuria by withdrawing from the League of Nations. Having taken themselves out of the League, the Japanese felt little constraints on further incursions into Chinese territory.

The Manchurian Resistance 1931–33

On paper the Japanese control of Manchuria was complete by early 1932, but in reality large areas of this vast territory were still unconquered. Large numbers of the Chinese troops of Chang Hsueh-liang had retreated into northern China as instructed by Chiang Kai-shek. Others – through



Three anti-Japanese resistance army commanders pose for the cameras at their base in the Manchurian countryside. Japanese propaganda described men like these as bandits, while the Chinese press hailed them as patriotic fighters. During the early 1930s large numbers of Japanese and Manchukuoan puppet troops had to be deployed on anti-bandit operations in Manchuria.

choice or simply because they were cut off by the Japanese advance – remained in Manchuria. Some former Nationalist officers immediately joined the Japanese, bringing their soldiers with them. One example was General Chang Hai-pong whose cavalry were accepted into the new puppet Manchukuoan Army en masse. Local Chinese commanders who refused to accept the Japanese take-over of their province quickly organized their men into anti-Japanese volunteer armies. Under the nominal command of General Ma Chang-shan, a native of Manchuria, these irregular forces reached a total of 300,000 fighters by 1932.

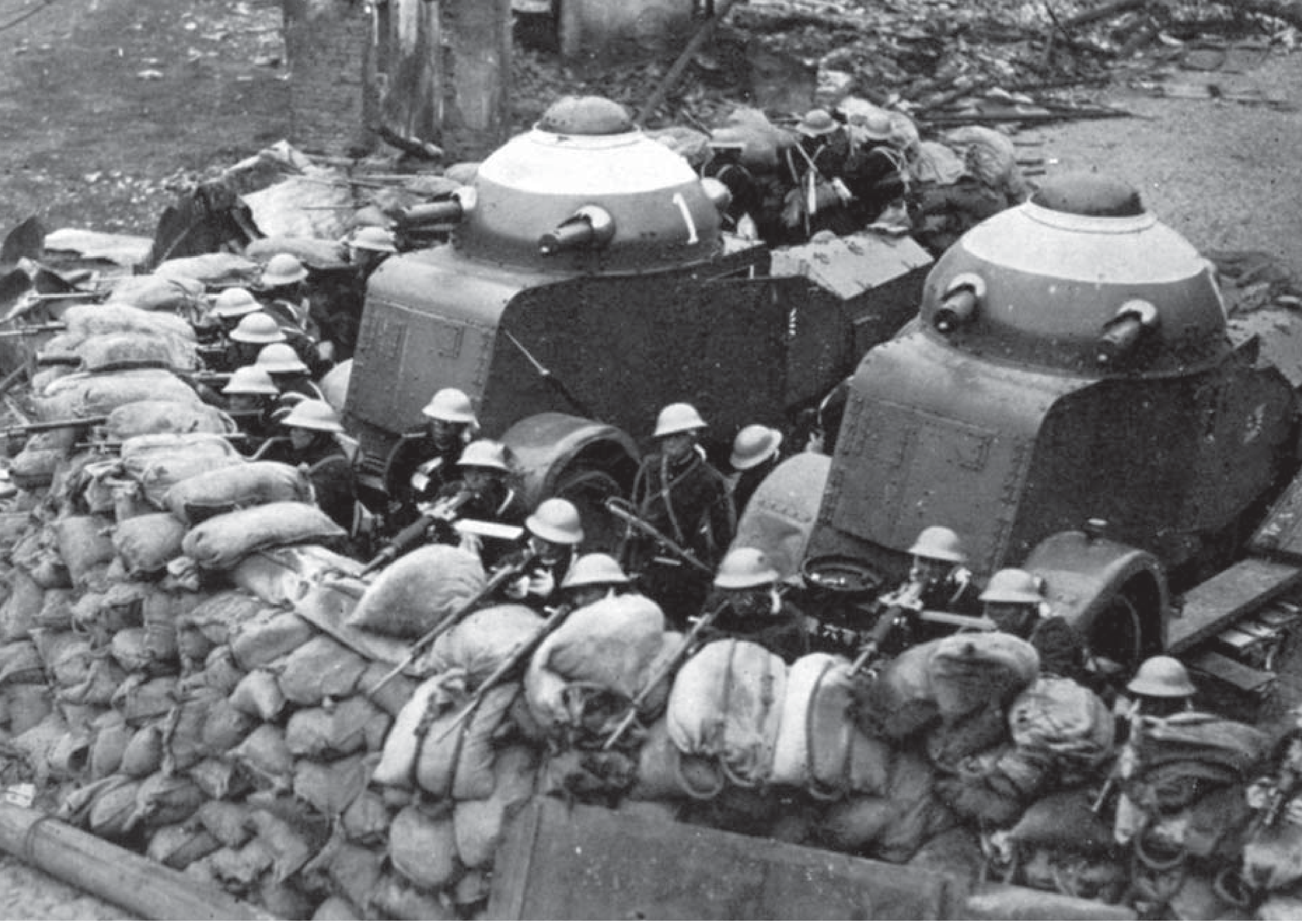
This loose alliance of anti-Japanese armies included the 'North-Eastern Loyal and Brave Army' which reached a total of 15,000 men. Its survivors would leave Manchuria after their defeat and ultimately served together in the Nationalist Army from 1937. Another guerrilla force was the 'Anti-Japanese Army for the Salvation of the Country' which had 10,000 well-armed fighters with machine guns and artillery. In addition, the 'Chinese People's National Salvation Army' grew from a 200-strong unit of the regular army in 1931 to a strength of 30,000 men in July 1932.

The anti-Japanese volunteers constantly attacked railways, isolated Japanese garrisons and any town or village guarded by the poorly- trained and armed Manchukuoan Army. At first the guerrillas were highly successful and their exploits made the pages of foreign newspapers and magazines and General Ma became a household name. In response, the Japanese launched a series of large-scale anti-bandit operations throughout the early 1930s which gradually wore down the volunteers. With no support from the government in Nanking, the volunteer commanders found it increasingly difficult to keep their men together. A shortage of supplies and food for the large numbers of men in the harsh Manchurian winters slowly sapped the volunteers' will to resist the Japanese. The larger armies had to break up into smaller bands or 'shanlin' to survive and these smaller units in turn were less effective. They resorted to low-level guerrilla attacks which, although still a nuisance, were no longer a threat to Japanese rule in Manchuria. The Japanese were, however, determined to end the resistance completely and used more and more troops in their pacification campaigns. By the end of the five-month conquest of Manchuria in February 1932, the Japanese had 60,500 men stationed there and this had risen to 95,000 by 1933. After 1932 the numbers of anti-Japanese volunteers began to steadily decline and by 1937 the Japanese claimed that only 20,000 were still active. Some volunteers escaped from Manchuria and joined the Nationalist Army or stayed and joined the Communist guerrillas.

Nationalist general Ma Chang-shan became an international celebrity when he led the widespread resistance to the Japanese occupation forces in Manchuria in the early 1930s. His irregular army fought a hard guerrilla campaign without support from central government until overwhelmed by the Japanese. Ma was finally defeated and escaped into Soviet territory to return a few years later to serve the Nationalist government.

The Manchukuoan Army 1932–37

In the early 1930s the Kwangtung Army in Manchuria was supported by the substantial army of the 'puppet' state of Manchukuo. The 'Empire of Manchukuo' had been inaugurated by the Japanese in Manchuria as a client state in February 1932. Its so-called chief executive was the last Chinese emperor, Pu Yi. It was planned that he would carry out this token role until he could be enthroned in 1934 as emperor, but in reality he would remain as figurehead leader of the Manchukuo state until the eventual defeat of the Japanese in August 1945. Manchukuo's Army had been raised initially from the ranks of the defeated Nationalist troops in Manchuria in 1932. When first organized it had a paper strength of 111,000 men in four Guard armies but this figure included many unwilling recruits who had to be weeded out. By 1935, the army had been re-organized into a more reliable force with five district armies and some smaller units totalling 80,000 men. The Manchukuoan Army was

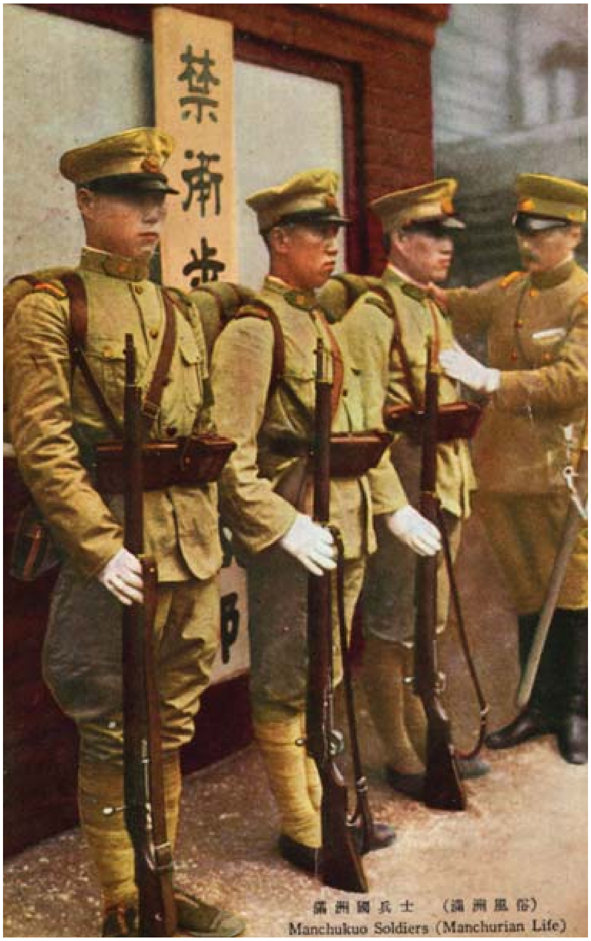


Japanese sailors from the Imperial Navy's ships off the coast of Shanghai provided the first combat units fighting for the city in January 1932. These infantry-trained naval troops were soon reinforced by the Japanese who by the time of the ceasefire in March had sent a total of 47,000 men into the battle. Chinese estimates of the number of Japanese fighting for Shanghai was 77,000 while they claimed they only had 63,000 soldiers defending the city.

equipped with some mountain guns, a few field guns and some home-made armoured cars. Gradually the ex-Chinese small arms were replaced by new Japanese rifles and machine guns. Its troops were involved with a large number of anti-guerrilla operations throughout the early 1930s. They usually went on these operations in mixed units with Japanese Imperial units. Some units performed well under the supervision of their Japanese advisors but others deserted whenever possible. Some co-operated with the resistance and rifles were occasionally given to the anti-Japanese guerrillas. Other Manchukuoan troops would warn the guerrillas when they were approaching their hideouts and fire high when not being watched by their Japanese 'allies'.

The Shanghai Incident

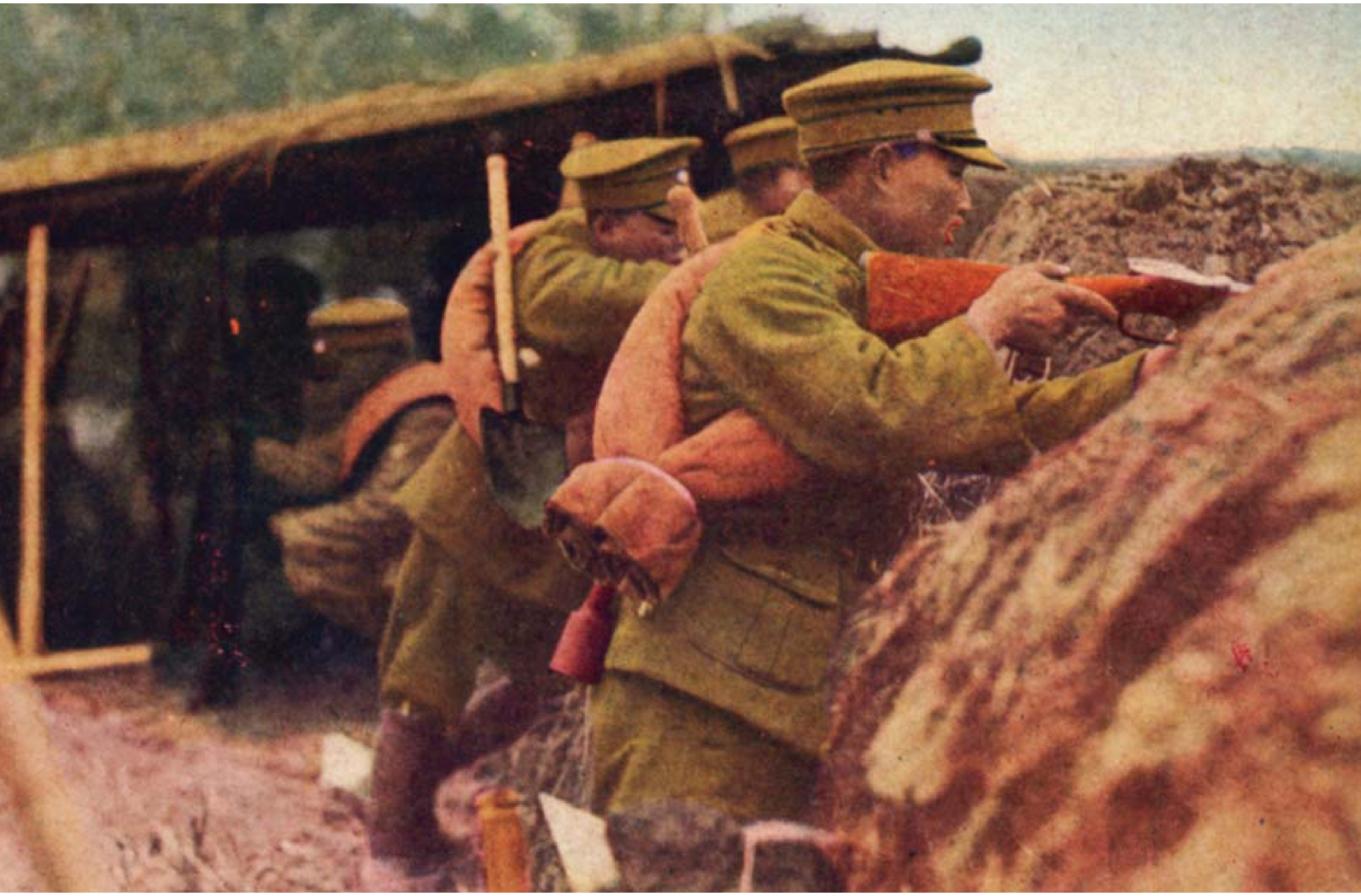
After the Japanese take-over of Manchuria, the outraged Chinese public reacted in a highly effective but peaceful way. They organized a nationwide boycott of all Japanese goods and businesses which immediately affected



Soldiers of the army of the 'puppet' state of Manchukuo are inspected by their Japanese military advisor while on guard duty in the early 1930s. The Manchukuoan Army was raised by the Japanese Kwangtung Army in 1932, which armed, trained and equipped them. Thousands of its soldiers fought – often reluctantly – alongside the Japanese Army in its anti-guerrilla campaigns in the early 1930s.

Japan's already struggling economy. China was by far Japan's largest market and they had rather naively expected the Chinese people to go on buying their goods despite their military aggression. The Japanese government was determined that the boycott had to be broken and the only means at their disposal were military ones.

In January 1932 the poor relations between Japan and China were further tested by an incident which took place in Shanghai. Five Buddhist monks visiting from Japan were badly beaten by a Chinese mob with one of them dying from his wounds. Armed Japanese residents and businessmen of Shanghai took to the streets in protest at the monks' treatment and several Chinese were killed. It later transpired that the entire incident was a plot by Japanese intelligence officers to cause a diversion in Shanghai and that Chinese thugs had been hired to attack the holy men. Almost immediately fighting began between naval landing parties from Japanese ships moored in Shanghai and the Chinese 19th Route Army. The 19th had just returned from fighting in an extermination campaign against Communists in Kiangsi province and were well trained and motivated. It was made up of troops from the Canton region of southern China and had little loyalty to Chiang Kai-shek personally. In fact, having been trained by Communists at Whampoa in the 1920s, most of their soldiers had left-wing sympathies. Fighting soon escalated in the city with the Japanese eventually having to deploy 70,000 marines and soldiers to the battle. The five-week battle took place predominately along the city's waterfront and caused a great deal of damage to the commercial heart of Shanghai. Bitter rivalries between the Japanese services were also highlighted by the navy's humiliation at having to ask the Imperial Army to send troops to Shanghai. The still undefeated 19th Army was withdrawn from the city in March and transferred under protest to far-off Fukien province. This was more to do with Chiang's jealousy of their now-popular commander, General Tsai Ting-kai, than any

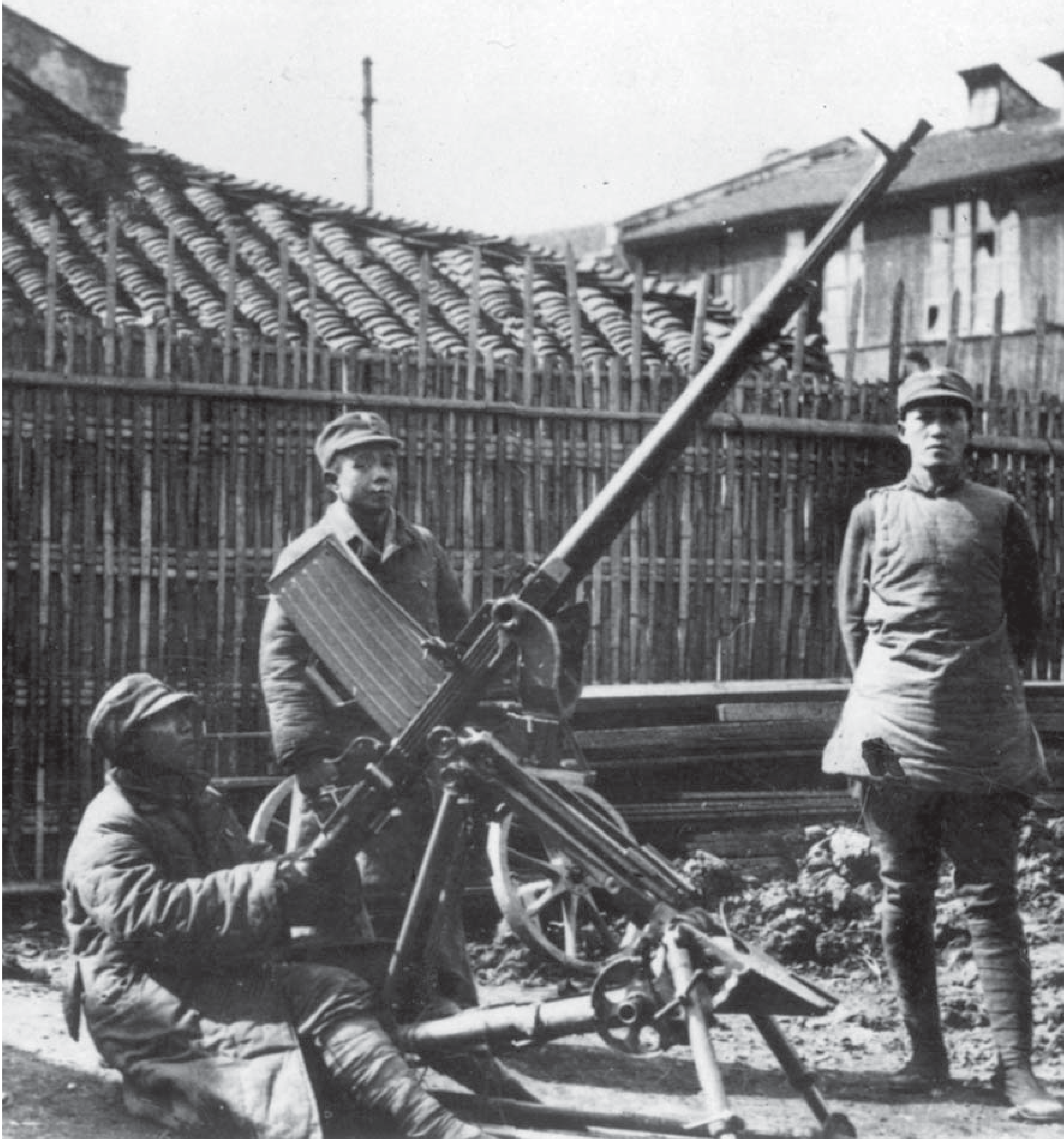


Nationalist soldiers of the 19th Route Army defend a trench during the fighting in Shanghai in 1932. The fighting spirit of the 19th caught the Japanese and the world press by surprise as they resisted the Imperial Army and naval landing troops. Uniforms worn by the Nationalist troops in Shanghai were split between the green-khaki wool types seen here and the grey cotton model worn with the ski type cap.

sound military reason. Chiang was forced under Japanese pressure to order the end of the boycott and to agree to a 40-mile exclusion zone around the city which Chinese troops were not allowed to enter!

THE ‘TWO LIU’ WAR

In the middle of the Japanese attacks on Manchuria and northern China between 1931 and 1933, a little-known war was fought out in the south-western province of Szechwan. The impoverished and underdeveloped province of Szechwan was divided up into six separate territories, each controlled by a former warlord, all of whom were officially under the orders of the Nationalist government. In reality the warlords



vied with each other to control as much of the province as possible and tried to build up their own armies. When Chiang Kai-shek ordered all the Szechwan warlords to reduce their armies as agreed in the 1929 army disbandment accord they all ignored him. They, like other provincial commanders, knew that the smaller their armies the less territory they could hope to control. The main rivalry in Szechwan was between General Liu Hsiang and his uncle General Liu Wen-hui. Liu Wen controlled most of western Szechwan while Liu Hsiang controlled the east and, significantly, the provincial capital Chungking. The Lius had co-operated in the past and had built up a small air force together with a handful of transport planes. They also had purchased a fleet of armoured cars built in Shanghai on truck chassis which gave them a great advantage over the other four Szechwan militarists. However,Liu Hsiang was ambitious and family ties did not stop him seeing his uncle as his main rival for power. Liu Wen-hui had annoyed Liu Hsiang by luring away army officers to serve him for higher wages. Liu Wen-hui had done the same to the other warlords in the province so Liu Hsiang assumed he could call on their support if it came to a war. Liu Hsiang's control of Chungking gave him a financial advantage as some taxes had to be paid through the capital. With these extra funds he began to buy French military aircraft from 1930 and by 1932 he had five Potez-25 and six Breguet-14A2 light bombers. At the same time Liu Hsiang made sure that none of the other Szechwan warlords was able to purchase large arms shipments and certainly not any aircraft.

With his aircraft, and with small arms he had purchased from unscrupulous arms dealers, Liu Hsiang launched a war against his uncle in October 1932. Liu Hsiang gave the war the title 'War to Stablize Szechwan' although in the press it was commonly known for obvious reasons as 'The Two-Liu War'. Involving over 300,000 men the war may have been restricted to one province but it was still a large-scale conflict. Besides his aircraft Liu Hsiang also had the advantage of a small fleet with two warships to support his campaign. Fighting began in October 1932 with Liu Wen-hui's 24th Army having a strength of 200,000 men while Liu Hsiang's 21st Army had about 100,000 men. Liu Hsiang was supported by generals Li Chih-Hsing and Lo Tse-chou with their 18,000 men while Tien Sung-wao and his 24,000 men supported Liu Wen-hui. Liu Hsiang was reinforced in late October by the 30,000-strong 20th Army of General Yang Sen. At first Liu Wen was successful and on 8 October he won a major victory over Liu Hsiang's Army at the city of Chengtu. Gradually over the winter of 1932–33, however, the superior weaponry

Opposite page
This Swiss-made 20mm Oerlikon light anti-aircraft gun is being made ready to fire at low-flying Japanese aircraft in 1932. The Nationalist Army had to rely on light guns like this to provide protection against the Japanese who had total air superiority. China's weapon-buying policy is demonstrated by the fact that every type of light anti-aircraft gun on the world market was imported by them in the 1930s.

of Liu Hsiang's Army began to tell. By the spring of 1933 Liu Wen-hui's armies had been defeated and he was forced to retreat. He lost all his territory in central Szechwan and was pushed westwards with the remnants of his army into a remote region of Sinkiang province.

CHINESE MUSLIM REVOLTS 1928–49

The Muslim population of China had always regarded themselves as separate to the majority Han population. At this point in time Muslims in China lived mainly in the western provinces of Sinkiang, Kansu, Chinghai and Ningsia and were divided into two distinct ethnic groups. Those of Turkic origin were known as Uyghurs and those of Chinese ancestry were known as Tungans. In 1925 the Kuominchun Army of the Christian general Feng Yu-hsiang had invaded the majority Muslim Eastern Kansu province and conducted a heavy-handed pacification campaign. The Kuominchun presence in Kansu had caused a great deal of resentment in the Muslim population. Feng Yu-hsiang's men had acted as an occupying army – which in essence they were – and had committed many atrocities. In the spring of 1928 this led to a revolt of the Tungan population under the command of General Ma Ting-hsiang. One of the rebel leaders was 17-year-old General Ma Chung-ying, known as 'Little Horse' or 'Little Commander'. This teenage commander was a bloodthirsty tyrant who executed his prisoners and thousands of civilians and was feared throughout the region. Between 1930 and 1934, his army – sometimes only 3,000 strong but rising at times to 10,000 men – took cities throughout Sinkiang. They were involved in most of the confused fighting which blighted the province in the early 1930s. General Ma had two Turkish military advisors and was rumoured to also employ a Japanese officer on his staff. His forces, which were made up almost entirely of Tungan cavalry, terrorized the towns along the old Silk Road which ran through central Asia. They then found employment in the service of the Nationalist government when General Ma was approached by Chiang Kai-shek's representatives. Chiang wanted Ma and his men to join the Nationalist Army and fight against the troublesome Sinkiang governor, Chin Shu-jen. Although Chin was officially a Nationalist appointee, his 'forbidden' friendly relationship with the Soviet Union meant that Chiang Kai-shek wanted him removed from office. Chin had already made himself unpopular with his supposed masters in Nanking when he used provincial

General Ma Chung-ying, 'Big Horse', was the young, charismatic but cruel leader of Muslim forces in Sinkiang province in the early 1930s. He is seen here in the uniform of the Nationalist 36th Division during the period when he fought for Chiang Kai-shek. The Sinkiang governor had invited Soviet troops into his province against the wishes of Chiang so he used Ma and his men in an attempt to remove him from office by force.

funds to purchase arms from the Soviet Union. These included two Soviet light bombers along with 'volunteer' Russian pilots for his own air force. The fear was that Chin had such friendly relations with the Soviet Army over the border that he might invite them in to take over the province, as indeed he later did. After some negotiation General Ma and his troops were incorporated into the Nationalist Army and given the designation of the 36th Division. Ma then decided that he should support a rebellion which had been going on in Sinkiang against Chin's rule since 1931.

The Kumul Rebellion (1931–34), was fought over the decision by Chin Shu-jen in 1930 to annex the Kumul Khanate. The khanate had been a self-ruling Muslim dependency of Imperial and then Republican China and its people resented its dissolution by Chin. They were especially unhappy when he doubled their taxes and began a series of repressive measures against the Muslim population of Sinkiang whether Tungan or Uyghur. The Kumul Rebellion was to engulf large parts of the province and was to include many sieges and battles which though small scale were extremely ferocious. Both the Muslim Uyghur rebels and the Sinkiang provincial troops committed a series of atrocities with no quarter given. During the war Chin was deposed not by the rebels but by a *coup d'état* within the Sinkiang capital Urumchi. His replacement, General Sheng Shi-t'sai, was a native of Manchuria who, although a good commander, was more unscrupulous than his predecessor.

In the midst of the Kumul Rebellion, Uyghur rebels declared a 'East Turkestan Republic' (ETR) in the west of Sinkiang province on 12 November 1933. The Uyghur people always referred to Sinkiang as East Turkestan and now, during the general rebellion against the Sinkiang government, they declared their independence from the rest of China. With their headquarters at Kashgar the rebels began to raise a regular army with a strength of 22,000 men in two divisions, the 'Queshqer' and 'Khotan'. The leadership of the republic knew that they would be faced

Uyghur soldiers of the Army of the East Turkestan Republic gather round some of their commanders during the 1933–34 war. These Muslim fighters fighting for the self-determination of East Turkestan from the rest of China were poorly armed. They had little heavy weaponry and rifles were either captured from the Chinese Army or were left over from warlord conflicts in Sinkiang.

with heavy opposition to their new state and planned to expand this poorly trained and armed army to 60,000 men. To help to achieve this they set up a military academy and enrolled their first class of cadets as fighting started.

Governor Sheng and his Sinkiang troops were reinforced by two Soviet brigades who arrived in the province in January 1934 dressed in quasi-civilian clothing. The two brigades – Altayiiski and Tarbakhataiskii – were made up of special troops from the GPU, the Soviet internal security force. Sheng was also supported by their armoured vehicles and aircraft, which arrived in Sinkiang unmarked: the Soviet Union was keen to keep their role in this remote war secret. Their motives for helping Sheng were mainly that they were still in the process of stamping out the last Muslim 'Basmachi' rebels in their own country. A victory by the ETR would, in their view, lead to support for the Basmachi revolt from their co-religionists in Sinkiang. Under pressure from the well-armed and trained Soviet-Provincial Army, the poorly armed army of the ETR was doomed from the start. Although the infamous General Ma Chung-ying and his 36th Division were fighting on the side of the ETR against Sheng they were defeated in a series of battles. The ETR leaders who escaped the firing squads went into exile in February 1934, planning to return when circumstances were more favourable. At the same time General Ma Chung-ying disappeared from the scene, most likely after making a deal with the Soviet Army. According to reports, his retirement from military life at the age of only 24 did not end well for him. He was said to have either been killed either in the Soviet purges of the late 1930s or in action in the Spanish Civil War.

Despite his victory in 1934, Sheng Shi-t'sai still faced opposition from the Muslim population in Sinkiang and was reliant on the guns of his soldiers and the Soviet Army to keep him in power. Although the Soviet Army withdrew from Sinkiang in 1935 their presence across the border was reassuring for Sheng, who knew that they were there if he needed them. Opposition to Sheng again turned into armed revolt a few years later when fighting broke out in 1937. The revolt, mainly in the south of the province, was led by General Abdul Niyaz who had raised an army of 10,000 men. On 30 May, rebels captured the city of Kashgar but their success was short-lived as a 5,000-strong Soviet force advanced against them. The Russians had tanks, armoured cars and artillery and were supported by a squadron of bombers. According to newspaper reports of the time the Soviets resorted to the use of gas against the rebels in this most secret of wars. Other reports say that the total number of Soviet troops used in crushing the 1937 rebellion was 30,000 men with 30 tanks, 11 armoured cars and 20 aircraft. The remnants of the 36th Division joined the rebels but this time their combined force was defeated in battle at Aksu. Rebel forces then retreated to Yarkand which fell to a joint Soviet and provincial army on 9 September. General Niyaz was captured and executed on 15 September and his forces and those of the 36th Division melted away. This victory finally left Sheng and his Soviet backers in control of the whole of Sinkiang.

Sheng was a highly unpopular leader who had up to 100,000 political prisoners in his jail during his rule. After foolishly turning against his Soviet sponsors in the early 1940s he unleashed an anti-Communist campaign which claimed thousands of victims including Mao Tse-tung's brother. In 1944 he asked to rejoin the Nationalist fold and was given a specially created post in the government – Chiang Kai-shek simply wanted to regain Sinkiang without any further bloodshed and so allowed Sheng to escape justice for his crimes.

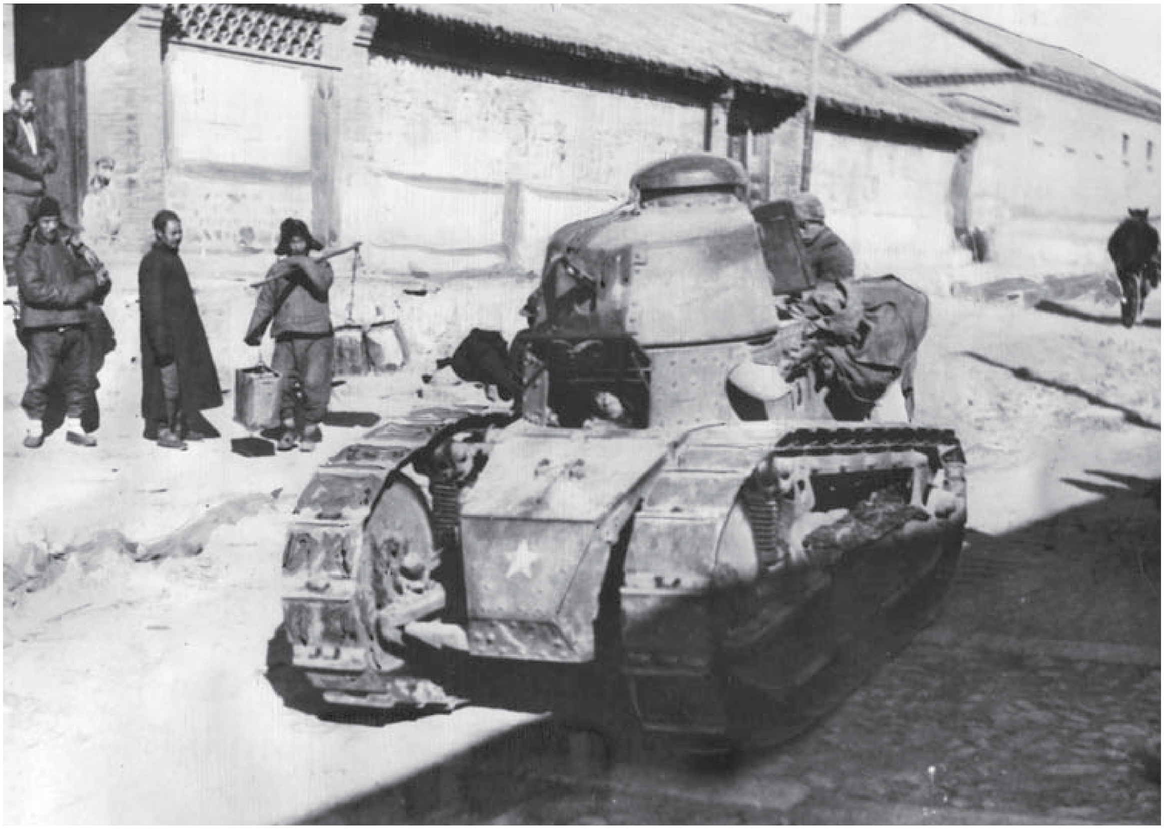
In a further twist to Sinkiang's complicated history, a second East Turkestan Republic (ETR) was set up in 1944, this time supported by the Soviet Union. The new ETR controlled three districts in the north of the province where they could be supplied across the Soviet border. The 30,000-strong army of the ETR fought against the Nationalist Army from 1945 until 1946 when it retired to the mountains. Most of the arms

Chinese cavalry of the Jehol provincial forces in 1933 on parade before the Japanese invasion. The forces defending the province against the Japanese were desperately short of heavy weaponry and were made up largely of regular and irregular cavalry. This troop is from one of the better-equipped units with each man having a modern Mauser rifle and the troopers wearing smart uniforms.

for the ETR were said to have been of German manufacture, from stocks captured in 1945. A motorized unit of the East Turkestan Republic Army included two tanks, two armoured cars and 12 artillery pieces. In 1949 a representative of the victorious Communist government in Peking met with the leadership of the ETR. The ETR was absorbed back into China and its 14,000 surviving soldiers, along with 14 aircraft, were finally enrolled into the People's Liberation Army.

THE INVASION OF JEHOL AND NORTHERN CHINA

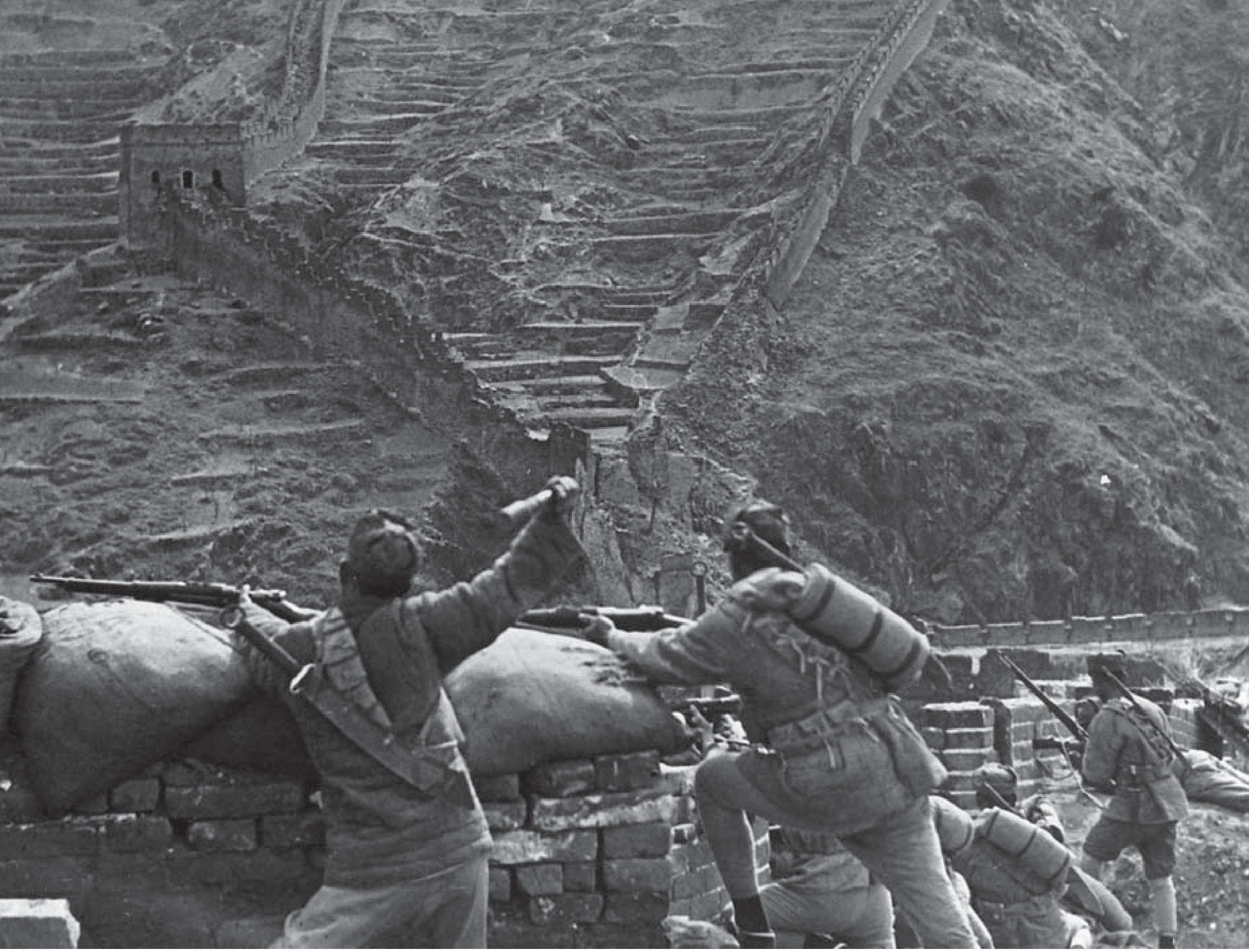
After the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and its conversion into the 'puppet' Empire of Manchukuo, the Japanese sought to expand the new state's territory. To the north-west of Manchukuo was the mountainous Chinese province of Jehol which the Japanese now claimed as part of their



A Japanese FT-17 tank with the Imperial Army's star symbol on the front rattles through a street in a town in Jehol province in 1933. Even though the number of armoured vehicles used by the Japanese during the 1933 fighting was small they faced little opposition from the poorly led Chinese provincial troops defending Jehol.

client state. According to the Japanese: 'The affairs of Jehol province are unquestionably an internal problem of Manchukuo'. In January 1933 the Japanese advanced north-westwards from Manchukuo into Jehol with an invasion force of 50,000 made up of two divisions, two mixed brigades and a cavalry brigade. Amongst the mechanized columns that made up the invading army were 13 medium and light tanks to which the defending Chinese had no answer. In addition to the Japanese there were 42,000 newly recruited Manchukuoan soldiers who, although poorly trained and armed, were on a par with the defending troops.

Jehol was defended by 50,000 troops made up of the 4th, 5th and 6th Army groups including large numbers of regular and irregular mounted troops. These were organized into three divisions, one regiment and five brigades of cavalry. Two divisions and three brigades of cavalry were irregulars belonging to the volunteer North Eastern Loyal and Brave Army. In command of the Chinese Army was the corrupt and incompetent General Tang Yu-lin, who had embezzled an estimated $10 million



These Nationalist troops have built sandbagged positions on the top of the Great Wall in preparation for fighting with the Japanese in 1933. The fighting in Jehol and in the region of the Great Wall was totally one-sided, as the Chinese had only swords, rifles and a few machine guns to counter the Japanese, who attacked with armoured vehicles, artillery and light bombers.

during his control of the province. When asked by the press how his army was performing against the Japanese he said simply that he 'did not know where it was'. With poor leadership, little heavy weaponry and armed only with swords and rifles, the Chinese defenders were gradually pushed back by the invading Japanese. In fact it was only the severe weather and difficult terrain that lengthened the campaign to three months. As part of the Japanese plan to establish a base in the north of China they also captured the coastal section of the Great Wall at the Shanhaiguan Pass. The pass had been defended by a Chinese force that lost 50 per cent of its men during the fighting. The Japanese used their 8th Division supported by ten tanks and four armoured trains and a force of light bombers in this one-sided contest. The fighting ended with the withdrawal of the Chinese to the south-west to join the troops defending Hopei province.

Once all their objectives had been reached in Jehol the Japanese began the next stage of their plan to move into northern China. The Japanese crossed the Manchurian border and advanced south-westwards into Hopei province to establish themselves on the north side of the Great Wall. The Japanese used some very clever subversive tactics against the Chinese defending Hopei and the Great Wall. These included bribery of Nationalist commanders, issuing fake and confusing orders to the defending army and inciting local rebel commanders to set up 'independent' regimes. Chinese troops defending Hopei were confused and felt abandoned by the Nanking government and although many continued fighting, others gave in. By the end of May, with no support coming from Chiang and his government, a local truce was arranged by the Chinese and the Japanese. The Tangku Truce called for the de-militarization of north-eastern Hopei province and the removal of all Chinese troops from the region. In their place would be Chinese armed police who must 'Not be constituted of armed units hostile to Japanese feelings'. In return the Japanese would withdraw their troops north of the Great Wall while insisting on having the military presence allowed under the terms of the Boxer Protocol of 1901. For the time being, the Japanese had – at least officially – achieved their aims in northern China. This had been done at the expense of the Chinese government which had effectively given away yet another portion of territory to avoid a full-scale war with the Japanese.

THE ANTI-COMMUNIST EXTERMINATION CAMPAIGNS 1930–34

After the Nationalists' victory in the Great Plains War of 1930, Chiang Kai-shek now turned his attention to the annihilation of the Communists. He was determined to destroy the Communist base area or 'soviet' established in Kiangsi province in the late 1920s. The first of a series of extermination campaigns was launched against the Kiangsi soviet with its 40,000 Communist troops in early December 1930 and lasted a month. It involved 12 Nationalist divisions totalling 100,000 men and was supported by an unknown number of second-line troops belonging to local warlords. These second-line troops, known as the 'Anti-Bolshevik Group', were there to watch the movements of the Communists rather than becoming involved in the fighting. This large Nationalist force began to attack the soviets from

Nationalist infantrymen prepare to fight the Japanese during the invasion of Manchuria in 1931–32 with rifles and little else. The soldiers of the North-East Army under the command of the 'Young Marshal' Chang Hsueh-liang were instructed to offer no resistance to the invading Japanese. Many opted to join the anti-Japanese armies forming in the countryside to fight the Japanese, while others turned to banditry.

the north in four formations. As the Nationalists advanced the Communists led them into a trap which resulted in the 18th Division being totally destroyed in the early hours of 30 December. Its commanding officer was publicly beheaded by the Communists as an example to other Nationalist officers. The Communists then moved eastwards and attacked the Nationalist 50th Division, which lost 50 per cent of its men. These and other defeats led to the withdrawal of the remaining Nationalists and a few months' break in the fighting before the next campaign was launched in May the following year.

The second extermination campaign took place in May 1931 and was an almost carbon copy of the first but this time the Nationalists doubled their forces and deployed 200,000 men. In the second campaign, however, the four Nationalist armies also attacked from the south and threatened the Communist enclave from five separate directions. Some of the Nationalist troops were commanded by generals who until recently had owed their loyalty to Chiang's enemies. These included the commander of the two divisions of the 26th Army who had been a subordinate of Feng Yu-hsiang.

The Communists had only 30,000 men to defend against the second campaign, although they were better equipped, following the capture of

Nationalist soldiers of the 88th Division march up to the front in Jehol in May 1933 having fought bravely in the defence of Shanghai in 1932. This 'elite' division was one of the first trained by the German military advisors in 1934 and went on to fight in the second battle for Shanghai in 1937. At the start of this battle the division had a strength of 14,000 men but most were lost during the heavy fighting.

weapons the previous December. Under the command of General Chu Teh and Mao Tse-tung the Red Army concentrated on the poorest Nationalist 5th Army and again waited in ambush. The 5th Army advanced into the ambush from the north-west and soon lost three of its divisions while the fourth retreated. Communist units then advanced to the north-east and destroyed another three divisions at the town of Kuangchang. Again the rest of the Nationalist units retired from the fighting and the Communists captured 20,000 rifles. In 15 days of fighting and in a series of five battles the Communists had completely destroyed the Nationalist Army sent against them. The fighting was over by the end of May and the Communists had again triumphed over the poorly trained and motivated Nationalists.

By this point Chiang Kai-shek was out for revenge and began planning immediately for a third campaign, which this time would include many of his most loyal and well-trained units. Mao Tse-tung claimed that the Nationalists had 300,000 troops ready to attack his 30,000 troops but this was almost certainly an exaggeration. After their two recent victorious campaigns the Communists may have had as many as 55,000 men while the front-line strength of the Nationalists was probably in the region of 130,000.

Soldiers under the command of the former 'Kuominchun' leader Feng Yu-hsiang take part in sword drill in their barracks in 1933. Feng had been accepted back into the Nationalist fold after a few years in exile following his defeat by Chiang Kai-shek in 1930. Chiang might publicly forgive former enemies like Feng when it suited him politically. They were however never given a command that might lead to them becoming a threat again.

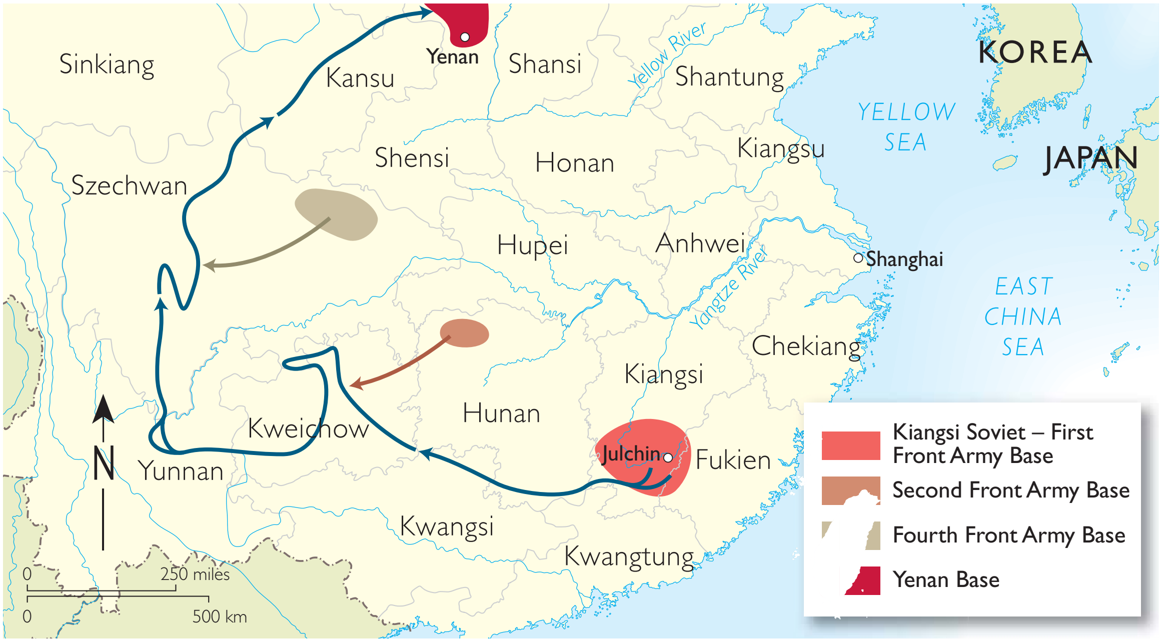
The third campaign was launched against the Oyuwan soviet base, which was under the command of Chang Kuo-t'ao. Again the Nationalists advanced into the soviet-controlled area in force and were roundly defeated first in Anhwei province where they lost 15,000 rifles and 20,000 prisoners to the Communists. Then an elite Nationalist Division recently trained by German military advisors was defeated in fighting in the south-eastern Honan province. With the arms captured in the two victories, the Communists in Oyuwan could now boast a force of 70,000 men armed with 40,000 captured rifles. They also had captured precious artillery pieces, machine guns and wireless sets which put them on an equal footing with their Nationalist enemies.

The attention of both the Nationalists and their Communist enemies' was then taken by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931. Even as the Japanese Kwangtung Army advanced through Manchuria, Chiang was preparing to launch a fourth extermination campaign. Chiang's attitude had always been that the greatest danger to China came not from the Japanese but from the Communists and they had to be dealt with as a priority. He thought that once the Communists had been defeated a more stable Nationalist government would be able to overcome the Japanese.

By June 1932, the Nationalists were ready to launch the fourth extermination campaign with a force of 154,000 men in 17 divisions. The Nationalists also had 70,000 men deployed on the Kiangsi–Fukien border, 70,000 troops on the Kwangtung border and 100,000 in the Kiangsi and Hunan provinces outside the region of the Kiangsi soviet. Communist numbers were about 65,000 and these were now well-armed veterans of the previous Nationalist attacks. The campaign lasted for a total of eight months, which included a temporary truce agreed by both, exhausted, armies. Again

A winding column of Nationalist troops march out on an anti-Communist extermination campaign in the early 1930s. Huge numbers of troops were used in an effort to destroy the Communist bases within Nationalist China in a series of five campaigns from 1930 to 1934. Although the first campaigns failed, eventually the sheer weight of Nationalist numbers forced the Reds to leave their soviet in Kiangsi province and begin the Long March. (Topfoto)

THE LONG MARCH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Kansu
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Yellow River
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Szechwan
Hupei
Anhwei
Shanghai
Yangtze River
EAST CHINA SEA
Chekiang
Kiangsi
Hunan
Kweichow
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Yunnan
Julchin
Fukien
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0
500 km
Kiangsi Soviet – First Front Army Base
Second Front Army Base
Fourth Front Army Base
Yenan Base

the Communists were able to repel the Nationalist attacks, which as previously suffered from a lack of accurate intelligence. Communist forces from the south reinforced the Kiangsi defenders and helped to out-manoeuvre the Nationalist formations. When the fighting ended in April 1933, although the Communists had survived and captured another 10,000 rifles, the pressure against the Kiangsi forces was beginning to tell.

Chiang was now determined that the next extermination campaign would be the last and began preparations for a final battle to destroy the Kiangsi soviet. He had employed a number of German military advisors from 1929 and one, Lieutenant-General Georg Wetzell, most likely helped him plan the campaign. The campaign began in September 1933 and was to last until October 1934 as the Kiangsi soviet was slowly starved into submission. The Nationalists were to employ a total of 900,000 troops with about 400,000 men in 360 regiments taking an active part in the fighting in the Kiangsi–Fukien region. The Nationalist Air Force in 1934 had a strength of 400 aircraft and most of the bombers were used in the campaign. Chiang's new strategy involved blockading the Communists in their enclave by building fencing and a series of 14,000 stone or brick blockhouses well guarded by his troops. This so-called 'great wall' which totally enclosed the

Opposite page
Mao Tse-tung, the firebrand revolutionary and future leader of the People's Republic of China, pictured in the early 1930s. For much of the late 1920s and early 1930s Mao was sidelined by the leadership of the Communist Party. However his inspirational command during the Long March of 1934–35 brought him to the fore of the party and he was soon undisputed leader of the Chinese Communists.

soviet was gradually moved forward during the course of the campaign to reduce the amount of territory under Communist control. At the same time 1,500 miles of new road were built around the soviet so that Nationalist troops and armoured vehicles could be quickly moved from battle to battle. The Nationalists' 500,000 other troops were used to man the blockhouses and other fortifications surrounding the soviet.

A British eyewitness reported the behaviour of Nationalist troops enforcing the blockade, saying that the situation in the part of Kiangsi province controlled by the Nationalist Army was bleak. Nationalist methods against the population came under criticism by the writer: 'Press gangs conscript labour, extra taxes and many forms of indignity and extortion have made their lives a misery and a burden to them and in return they have received only the most inadequate protection.' When describing the military performance of the troops he commented:

> The thing that stuck me most on the front was that every officer to whom I spoke was thinking in terms of defence not attack. There is no real 'front' in Kiangsi. Fortifications have been erected round the villages and towns… Outside these fortifications, there are no outposts and few patrols; news of a Communist advance is the signal for the troops to withdraw into the villages.[7]

Whatever the weaknesses of the Nationalist troops surrounding the soviet, the economic blockade was achieving its aim of slowly starving the Communists of food and other supplies, including vital salt. No new recruits could get into the Communist base and those inside began to suffer from exhaustion and morale plummeted accordingly. The Communists were not able to attack the Nationalists from the rear in guerrilla attacks as they had done in the previous four encirclement campaigns. People began to die in the Kiangsi soviet with reports of 60,000 military deaths and up to 1,000,000 civilian deaths during the siege. Chiang now brought in some of his better units including the 'elite' 88th Division to finally crush the Communist resistance. In April 1934 the weakened Communists suffered a heavy defeat at the battle of Kuangchang on the Kiangsi–Fukien border. They lost 4,000 dead during the fighting and also suffered 20,000 wounded – many of whom later died. This defeat left the Communist capital Juiching undefended and it was only a matter of time before the Nationalists mopped up any surviving troops.

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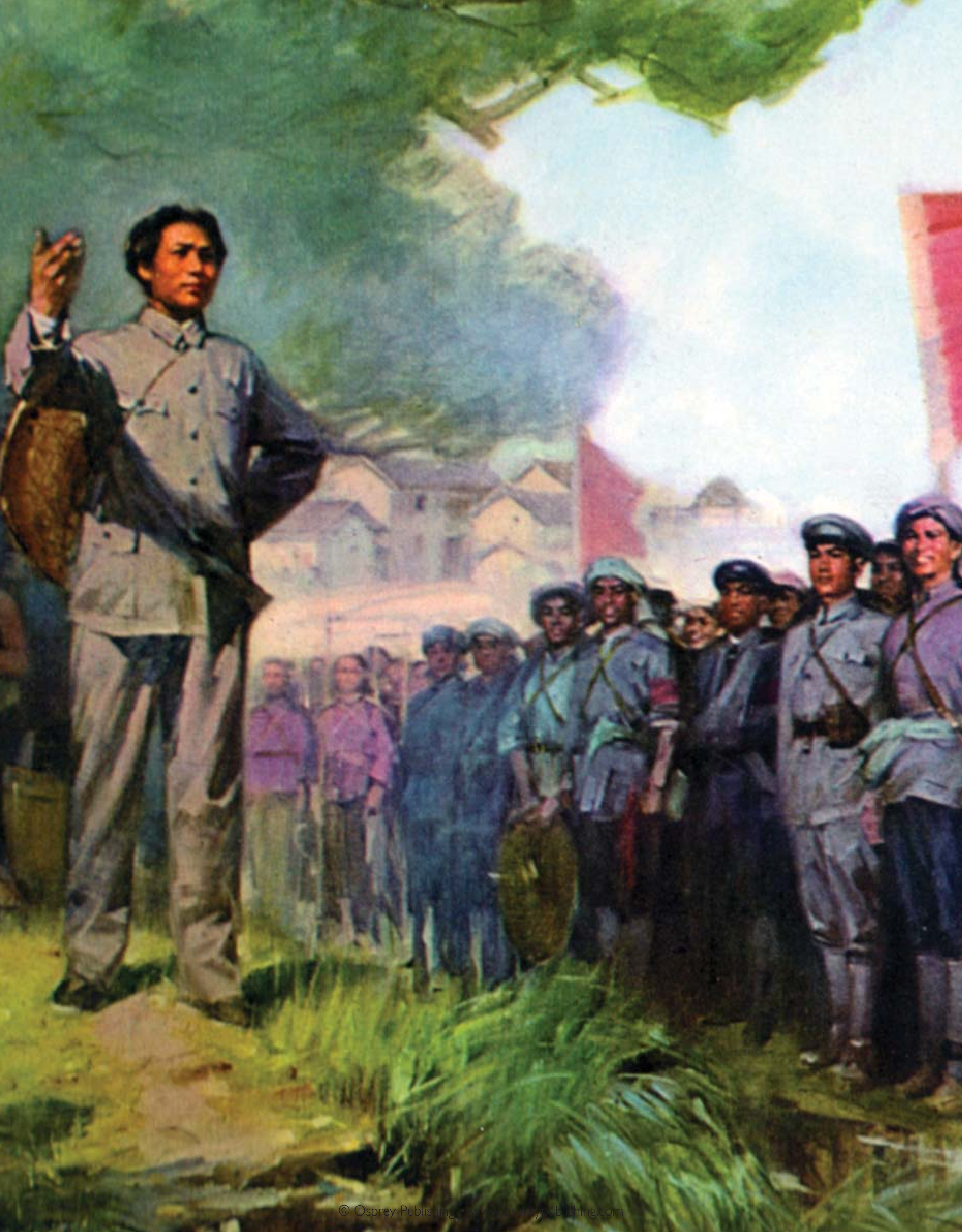
[7] Peter Fleming, *One's Company* (1934).

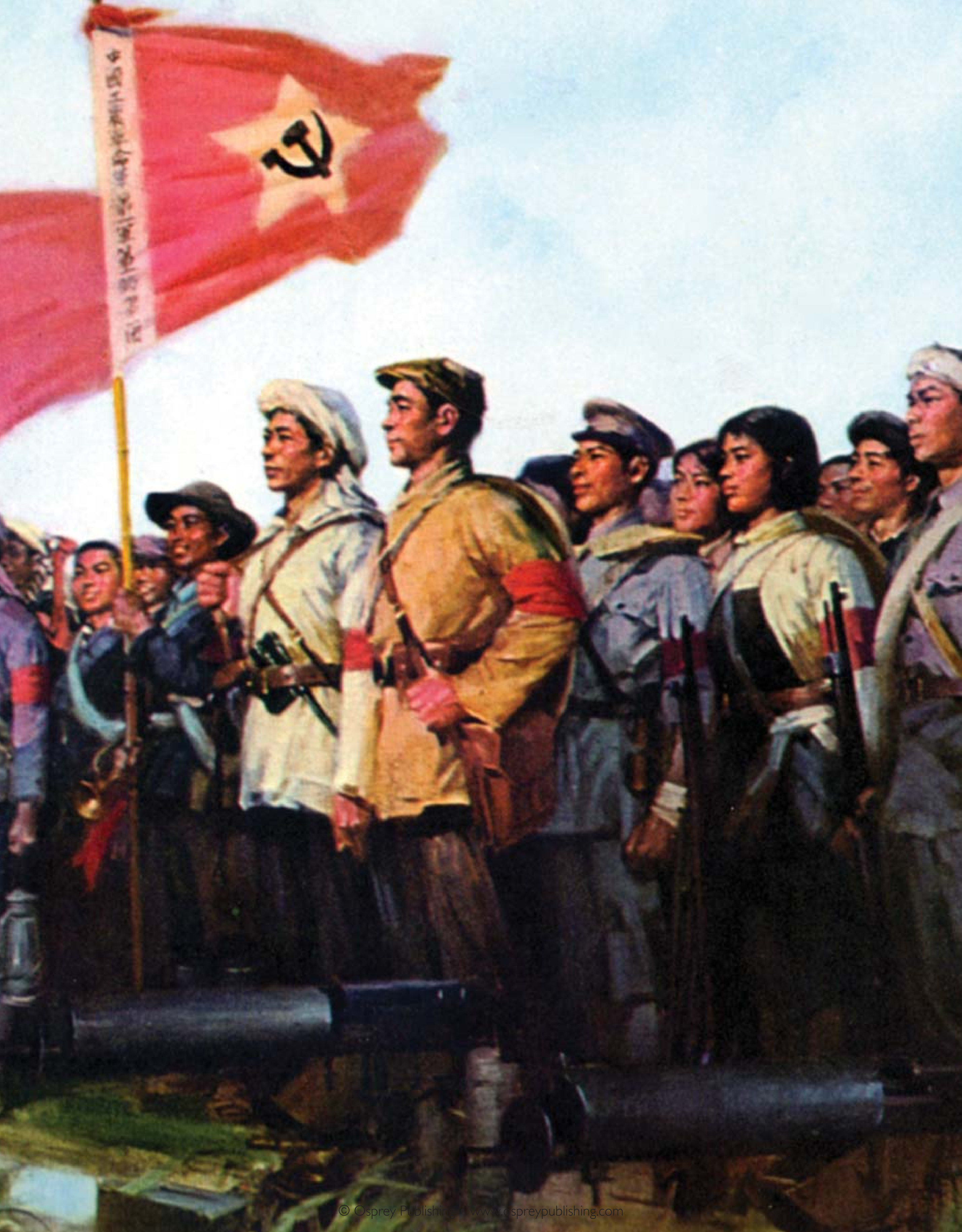
On 15 October 1934, a column of 100,000 men, women and children of the Red Army began the 6,000-mile trek to a new base in Shensi province. Only between 10,000 and 20,000 reached the end of the Long March, the rest having deserted or died on the arduous journey. Mao Tse-tung used the march to impose his authority on the Chinese Communist Party and by the time the survivors reached Yenan, their new base, he had emerged as undisputed leader.

The Communist leadership realized that the only way to survive was for the whole population of the Kiangsi soviet to break out and look for a safe haven elsewhere. Of course Chiang and his advisors were not expecting the Communists to surrender as they knew what fate awaited them. They had two choices, stay where they were and fight to the death or escape from the tightening noose before it was too late.

The Long March

The 6,000-mile 'Long March' undertaken by the Chinese Red Army between 1934–35 must rank as one of the greatest military achievements in the annals of modern history. This strategic 'retreat' or as some have described it strategic 'advance' took the Red Army through the provinces of Kiangsi, Hunan, Kweichow, Yunnan, Szechwan and Eastern Tibet. They marched over 6,000 miles, several of the highest mountains in Asia





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In this highly stylized propaganda painting, Mao Tse-tung addresses the soldiers of the Red Army before they embark on their epic Long March. Although romanticized, the painting does show the mixture of civilian and military dress worn by the Red Army in 1934–35. Above the men flies the Communist Party war flag with the hammer and sickle symbol on the white five-pointed star.

These Nationalist troops are preparing to put down a rebellion in July 1935 by units of the army protesting about Chiang Kai-shek's appeasement policy towards Japan. The Japanese demand that Chinese forces be removed from a demilitarized zone in northern China caused outrage amongst the troops ordered to leave the region. Chiang was trying to stop further Japanese aggression against China until he was ready to fight them with his modernized army.

and crossing several large rivers. All along the journey the army was attacked by large regular Nationalist formations, the armies of regional warlords and by bandit groups. It took almost a year to make the journey – and out of 368 days only about 100 were allowed for rest. As the Red Army was constantly harassed from both ground forces and the majority of the Nationalist Air Force they had to keep on the move. An average rate of 23.5 miles per day was achieved during the 268 marching days, which was a major achievement especially considering the terrain. This overall rate included the days when battles had to be fought and rivers and mountains crossed with little or none of the journey taking place over modern roads. There were a large number of minor skirmishes fought during the march and at least 15 days were spent fighting major battles with the Nationalists and others. Throughout the march it was almost impossible to carry the wounded and Red Army soldiers were told, 'If you can walk, then go. If you cannot, you will be left behind.'

Plans for the breakout from the Kiangsi soviet were prepared in the utmost secrecy as the only chance of success was if the Nationalists were caught unaware. Any warning would have allowed Chiang to plug any weak spots in the blockade with additional forces. The Communists' plans were also given greater impetus by the knowledge that Chiang Kai-shek was planning a sixth extermination campaign for the autumn. The Red Army began to probe the Nationalist defences around the Kiangsi soviet looking for weak spots where they could break through. The weakest point in the Nationalist blockade was discovered in the far south-west. Even though this was the best place to break through the blockade, there were four lines of north–south defences. These 150-mile deep defences were manned by Kwangsi and Kwangtung provincial troops who were not as disciplined as the Nationalist troops

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blockading the northern defences. They had also ignored Chiang's blockhouse policy and had simply posted units along the border of the soviet, leaving gaps in between. Another advantage to breaking out of the looser blockade to the south-west was that the 'elite' Nationalist troops were all stationed on the other side of the soviet.

The breakout was to be led by the 1st and 3rd Army corps, which contained the best troops and had the best military commanders, Lin Piao and P'eng Te-huai. Lin had 15,000 men and P'eng about 13,000 but each had only about 9,000 rifles with 100 rounds per rifle. They also had two field guns, 30 mortars and 300 machine guns per corps but only 500–600 rounds available per machine gun. Due to the Nationalist blockade, ammunition for all the Red Army's weaponry was in short supply. Behind the two corps followed the so-called 'command column' which included all the Kiangsi soviet's Central Committee members as well as a small anti-aircraft unit. In the rear came the 'support column' which included the medical corps and field hospital units as well as the remainder of the government personnel. They also had some portable machinery for making ammunition and repairing damaged rifles and machine guns. Other machinery carried included presses for printing propaganda leaflets and newspapers to hand out as they marched. The two columns totalled 14,000 men with about 4,000 also counted as combat troops and only 35 women. These women included the wives of the Communist leadership including Mao Tse-tung's second wife. In addition to the main units were three smaller army corps which were even less well equipped than the 1st and 3rd corps. They were given the responsibility of defending the flanks of the advancing army with whatever weaponry they had. All the other women and children were left behind in the soviet, along with a 28,000-strong rearguard. This rearguard included 20,000 wounded who Mao knew had no chance of surviving the march. They were given instructions by Mao to operate as guerrillas and to try and retain some control over parts of Kiangsi in case their comrades should return one day.

The long marchers broke through the blockade and the first of the four defence lines around the Soviet on 16 October 1934. At first all went more or less to plan and the marchers crossed the Tao River before breaking through the second defence line on the Kiangsi–Hunan border. Although P'eng Te-huai's 3rd Corps broke through with few problems the 1st Corps of Lin Piao suffered heavy casualties fighting in the mountains to the south. With large numbers of Nationalist and Provincial troops in pursuit, the pace of the march had to be quickened. A strict four hours

The Fukien Rebellion

The Fukien Rebellion began in October 1933, led by Generals Tsai Ting-kai, Chen Ming-shu, Li Chishen and Chiang Kuang-nai who had all held high rank in the 19th Route Army which had fought so bravely at Shanghai in 1932. These commanders were all progressive in their political outlook and saw the Japanese not the Communists as the real enemy of China. The 19th Route Army had been sent to Fukien to suppress the Communist forces there but were reluctant to do so. Instead of fighting they negotiated with them and together proclaimed a new government. The new government was called the 'People's Revolutionary Government of the Republic of China' and a new flag was designed. The left-wing and pro-Communist policies of the new government alienated some potential supporters, who were also put off by the decision to remove portraits of the universally revered Sun Yat-sen from official buildings. Even the design of the new flag, with its red over blue halved field and a yellow star, put off some who were traditional by nature. Some, like the generals of the Kwangsi Clique who were considering supporting the new government, were put off by its policies. Others, like General Feng Yu-hsiang, waited to see how the government fared against the Nationalist Army before committing themselves. The Fukien government appointed General Tsai Ting-kai as head of the military and the 19th Route Army was re-named the 'People's Revolutionary Army'.

Although the 19th Route Army had a good reputation after its performance during the Shanghai incident of 1932 it could not hope to stand alone against the Nationalist Army. Assurances of help from the Kiangsi soviet before the launching of the Long March were unrealistic as they were fighting for their own survival. The Nationalist military response to the rebellion started in December 1933 when Chiang Kai-shek despatched substantial forces to Fukien. Heavy air attacks on the rebels demoralized them before the ground offensive had even been launched in early January 1934. This quickly mopped up the forces of the Revolutionary Army even though some former 19th Route Army units had already retreated. Within two weeks the remnants of the Revolutionary Army had been defeated and the government surrendered on 13 January. Its leadership went into exile.

Rebel fighters are brought into Nationalist lines after the defeat of the Fukien Rebellion of 1933–34. The Nationalist 19th Route Army had been sent to Fukien province in 1933 to attack the Communists, but instead joined with them and formed a revolutionary government, renaming their army the 'People's Revolutionary Army'.

marching/four hours resting regime allowed the marchers to pull away from their pursuers. The long marchers then broke through the third Nationalist defence line on the Wuhan–Canton Railway. They were almost trapped at the fourth and final defensive line along the Xiang River in Kwangsi province in mid-December. Pressure from the Nationalists and their provincial Allies made it impossible for the long marchers to

link up with other Communists in Hunan province. Instead the long marchers crossed into Kweichow province where they captured several small towns and replenished their supplies. They also took the opportunity to abandon much of their heavy equipment including their field guns for which they had no shells left. On 5 January the Red Army captured the town of Tsunyi in Kweichow province and a meeting was called to discuss the future of the Communist Party. The Tsunyi Conference, which was held on 15–18 January 1935, was attended by 18 delegates who discussed amongst other topics the reasons for the failure of the Kiangsi soviet. The conference agreed that the defensive attitude of the Red Army had doomed it to failure against the superior Nationalist forces. This decision vindicated Mao Tse-tung who had argued against a purely defensive strategy and strengthened his position within the Communist Party. When the conference ended Mao was elevated to full membership of the Communist Politburo and was made military assistant to Chou En-lai. Over the next few months Mao began to take over Chou's role and to assert his leadership of the Chinese Communists.

In March 1935 the long marchers advanced northwards with the intention of joining up with the forces of General Chang Kuo-t'ao, the survivors from the Oyuwan soviet. When they failed to meet up with Chang and his army they headed west into Yunnan province where they briefly threatened the provincial capital Kunming. The Nationalist governor of Yunnan, General Lung Yun, effectively turned a 'blind eye' to the Communists' presence. He appears to have decided that it would be preferable to let the long marchers pass through Yunnan, as long as they didn't attempt to settle there. However when the long marchers reached the Yangtze River in the west of Yunnan province on 1 May they found that Nationalist troops had secured all the ferries. The Nationalists had also placed strong forces at all the available crossing points. Faced by these strong forces the Communists made a strategic withdrawal before counter-attacking and sending a strong force against the city of Yunnanfu. This attack led the Nationalist garrison commander to withdraw his troops from the countryside back into the city effectively reducing the number of troops available to block the Red Army's river crossing. The Nationalists believed that the Red Army intended to cross the river at Lengkai but instead they fell back. They then outflanked the defenders and crossed at the one poorly defended crossing point. According to Communist historians some Red Army soldiers dressed in Nationalist uniforms captured the ferry. According to the story they marched 85 miles in 24 hours to capture the ferry before it could be

Opposite page
An anti-aircraft machine gunner of the Nationalist Army fires his Maxim M1924 at attacking aircraft during the Suiyuan campaign of 1936–37. During the early to mid-1930s, the Chinese clashed with Inner Mongolian separatist armies supported by the Japanese on several occasions. The full-scale invasion of China in 1937 saw the takeover of the region and the setting up of a puppet government under the control of the Japanese.

reinforced! Having crossed the river they persuaded the Nationalist troops on the other side to send over all the ferry boats. With the additional ferries the Red Army was then able to cross the Yangtze and establish a base on the northern bank.

After crossing the Yangtze with minimal losses, the Red Army marched northwards into territory controlled by the fierce aboriginal Lolo tribesmen. These tribesmen hated the Chinese, no matter their political affiliation, so would certainly attack the Red Army. The Communist leadership managed to ingratiate themselves with the Lolo leaders and swore a pact of peace with them at a meeting – no small feat. Their willingness to participate in tribal ceremonies such as drinking chicken blood may have helped. After being allowed through the Lolo lands unmolested the army came to the next obstacle, the Tatu River. After trying unsuccessfully to cross the flooding river at Anshunchnag, they had to take a 200-mile detour over the foothills of the Himalayas to Luting on the Szechwan–Tibetan border. The only available bridge across the river was defended by a newly arrived and well-armed Nationalist force which had removed the bridge's wooden planking. All that remained of the 120-metre long bridge were the nine chains which supported the floor planking with two chains at each side as hand rails. In one of the most daring exploits of the Long March a hand-picked 22-man commando unit crossed the chain bridge on 29 May under heavy fire. The commandos had to crawl along the chains and several fell to their deaths. When the surviving commandos reached the other side they defeated the Nationalist defenders and replaced the planking. Mao Tse-tung was later to tell Western journalists that the crossing of the Luting Bridge was the single most important event of the Long March.

After the crossing of the Luting Bridge the next obstacle for the Long Marchers was the Great Snow Mountains on the Szechwan–Tibetan border. Many of the marchers, including Mao, fell ill during the crossing of the mountains and most of the men suffered terribly from frostbite. By the time the marchers reached the Szechwan town of Mouking in June 1935 the original 80,000 long marchers had been reduced to about 40,000. There the marchers finally met up with a 45,000-strong Communist force under the command of Chang Kuo-t'ao. Chang was leading his men, armed with only 20,000 rifles, away from their northern Szechwan base which had been under attack by Szechwanese warlord troops. The obvious plan seemed to be to try to unite the two armies and for two weeks Mao and Chang held discussions. At the end of the

Opposite page
The cover of a Chinese news magazine of 1933 shows a Browning machine-gun crew of the Nationalist Army in a frozen riverbed in Jehol province. Troops defending Jehol had to face the mechanized might of the invading Japanese Army armed only with a few pieces of mountain artillery and a handful of light anti-aircraft guns. When the Japanese conquered Jehol it was incorporated into their puppet 'Empire of Manchukuo'.

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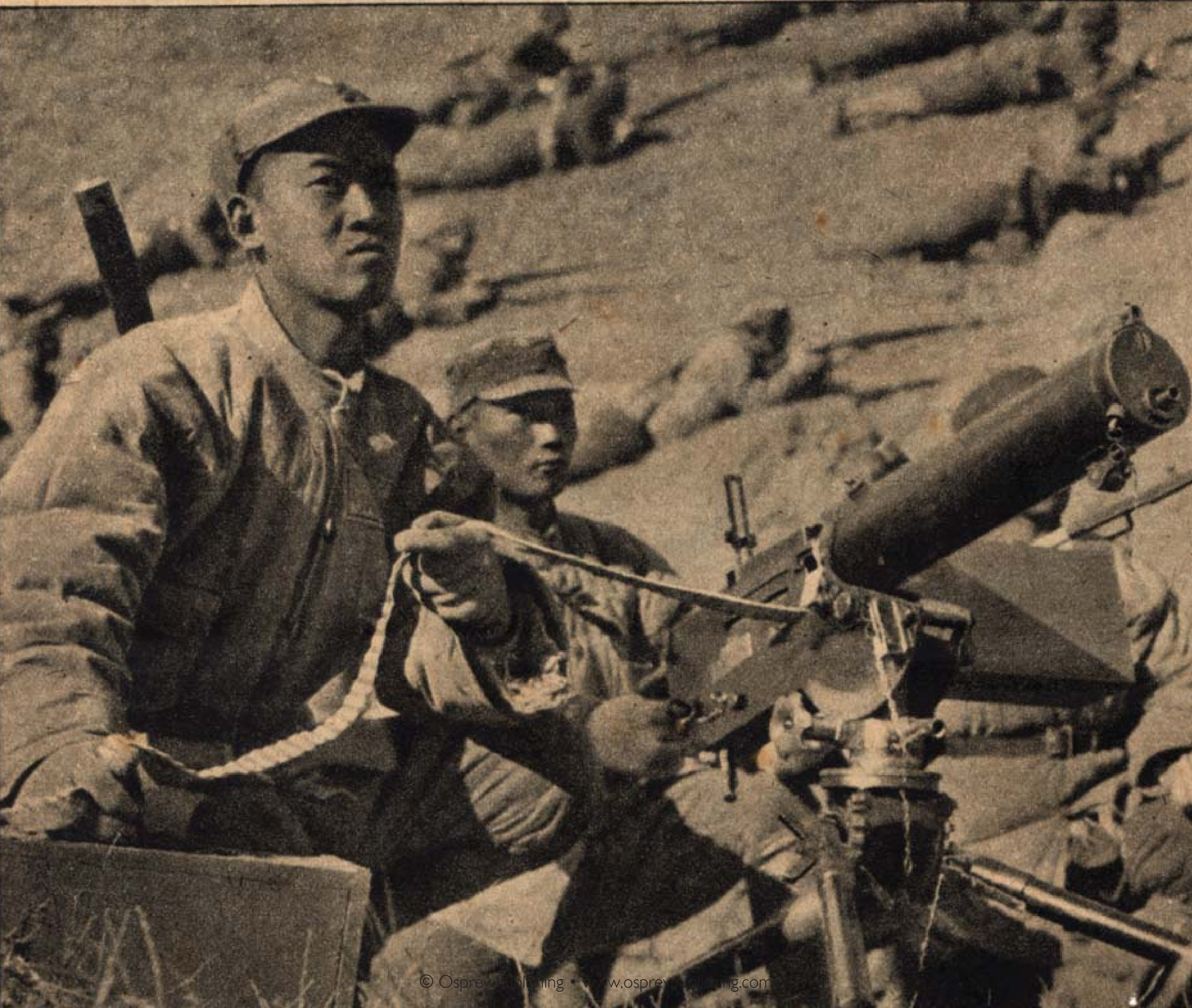


lengthy negotiations Chang and Mao finally decided that there were too many political and strategic differences between them. Mao wanted to continue the march to the north-east to Shensi while Chang insisted on establishing a new soviet in the Szechwan–Sinkiang border region. Mao Tse-tung also advocated a united effort of all Chinese against the Japanese while Chang did not want to co-operate with the Nationalists. Their many differences meant that uniting the two armies was not practical, although they parted on fairly amicable terms.

Before they left their armies were re-organized on the orders of Chu Teh, the Communists' commander in chief. Mao was now given command of the so-called 'Eastern Column' which was made up of the remains of the 1st and 3rd corps along with two corps of Chang's forces. Chang was given command of the 'Western Column' consisting of Mao's 5th and 9th corps as well as the rest of his own forces. Chu Teh went with Chang to the south-west to prepare their troops for the coming winter campaign. Mao and his Eastern Column prepared to cross the barrier formed by the marshlands along the Kansu–Chinghai border. The marshlands were a mixture of wet grasslands and quicksands

This Swedish-made Bofors M1930 75mm field gun belongs to the forces of General Fu Tso-yi in Suiyuan province in 1936. His men are well dressed for the winter campaign against an invasion force made up of Mongolians and Manchurians with Japanese military advisors. Fu's heroic defence of Suiyuan was a great boost to the demoralized Chinese people who for once had a victory to celebrate.

which were swept by a bitter wind at that time of year. In order to prepare themselves for the crossing of the marshlands the exhausted long marchers rested for three weeks. After crossing the marshlands the 8,000–9,000 surviving long marchers faced a final challenge when they encountered the famed Kansu provincial cavalry of the Nationalist Army. After breaking through the cordon laid down by the Kansu units and defeating some of the Nationalist units they were able to add a number of captured horses to their force.

After escaping from the Kansu forces they were finally able to meet up with the Northern Shensi guerrillas on 20 October. Together the combined force set up their base at Yenan and waited for any stragglers to find their way to the new base. Over the next year survivors from Chang Kuo-t'ao and Chu Teh's 'Western Column' limped into Yenan. By the time all the surviving Communist troops had gathered in their Shensi base their numbers had reached 20,000. After some rest, the marchers began to turn the military base at Yenan into a working capital. They built houses, meeting rooms, offices and workshops by digging into the caves on the hillside around the town. One of the large caves was extended and a 'cave university' was established with students eventually attending it from all over China. After suffering so much during the Long March, some new arrivals were totally unimpressed with Yenan as a new base. The initial lack of facilities and the poorness of the countryside around Yenan shocked some marchers. One commented that. 'The soil was thin, the inhabitants poor. The population was sparse, there was no rice'. Through a series of speeches Mao soon lifted his men's spirits, telling them of the advantages of Yenan and Shensi province as a base. He gave two main reasons why Yenan was far more suitable as a revolutionary base than Kiangsi. Firstly it was a better position geographically from which to resist the Japanese and secondly the region was so poor and isolated that the Shensi peasants would be more receptive to the Communists' revolutionary message.

THE SUIYUAN CAMPAIGNS

After the signing of the Tangku Truce in 1933 and the demilitarization of much of northern China the Japanese began to plan for the future take-over of the region. They constantly plotted and schemed different ways to undermine Chiang Kai-shek's control of north China. Part of their plan was to support any anti-Chiang rebellion, however insignificant, with arms and training. During the early to mid-1930s a series of small-scale clandestine wars in outlying provinces like Chahar were secretly supported by the Japanese. They claimed this was done at the request of rebels who were fighting for their liberation from Nationalist rule. One such rebellion led to the setting up of a semi-independent regime in eastern Hopei province in 1935 which lasted until 1937. This 'puppet' government was controlled by a former Nanking-appointed governor, Yin Ju-keng. Yin's regime was defended by a poorly armed 18,000-strong army which the Japanese restricted to small arms with limited amounts of ammunition. Other Japanese plans that barely got off the ground included military operations by Chinese rebels in the north-western province of Chahar and a scheme to encourage the coastal province of Fukien to break away.

By far the most ambitious plan during the 1933–37 period was the backing of the independence campaign for Inner Mongolia. Teh Wang, a Mongolian prince, was agitating for the creation of a separatist state in the remote region to the south of the Mongolian Republic. Prince Wang received secret military aid from Japanese agents and began to organize an army to 'liberate' the province of Suiyuan where he planned to base his Inner Mongolian government. The 10,000-strong Inner Mongolian Army he created was a hodge-podge of paramilitary volunteers, Mongolian cavalrymen, bandits and soldiers seconded from the Manchukuoan Army. Only 50 per cent of the men had rifles and there was little if any training given to the hastily raised force. During the Mongolians' invasion of Suiyuan in October 1936, they received artillery and air support from the forces 'of an unknown nation' according to the news reports. This secret Japanese military support included small elite units of troops to stiffen the invaders' resolve, and small numbers of tanks and aircraft. With this support the Inner Mongolians were able to capture the city of Pailingmao. The Nationalist forces in Suiyuan were made up of a mixture of regular and irregular troops under

Nationalist soldiers stop off while on patrol in a village on the border between Tibet and Szechwan province in 1936. It was generally the case that the further away from the centre of government in China, the worse the soldiers were. Soldiers like this received little pay, no new weaponry or equipment and had little or no training during their service.

the command of General Fu Tso-yi. General Fu and his troops surprised everyone by advancing and throwing the Mongolians and their Japanese advisors out of their headquarters in November 1936. Although the 1936 victory was against proxy forces of the Japanese it was still a great morale booster for the Chinese people. For once they had succeeded in defeating an invasion of their territory which was widely known to be supported by the Japanese Army. Shortly after this efforts would be made to finally unite Communist and Nationalist forces against the invader through the so-called Sian Incident.

THE SIAN INCIDENT

In the autumn of 1936 a meeting took place at a Catholic Mission at Sian in northern China between Communist negotiator, Chou En-lai, and the Nationalist Young Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang. Chiang Kai-shek had tasked the Young Marshal with destroying the Communists in north China using his powerful North-East Army. Chang was not happy about this role and would have preferred to use his troops against the Japanese forces occupying northern China. Mao Tse-tung sent Chou to try and negotiate a truce between Chang Hsueh-liang and the Red Army. Realizing that Chiang Kai-shek would never agree to meet him face to face, Mao thought that he could use the more approachable Chang to act as a third party. At the meeting Chou told Chang that Mao agreed that for the time being Chiang Kai-shek was the obvious Chinese leader to take on the Japanese. He suggested that if Chiang was agreeable the Communists would put their troops at the disposal of the Nationalists in the fight against the Japanese. In return he asked that the Communist troops who were to serve in the Nationalist Army should be treated equally. Another demand was that when the Japanese were defeated, the Communist Party should be allowed to operate as a legal opposition to the Kuomintang. Finally Mao, through Chou, asked that all Communist prisoners in Nationalist prisons should be released. If Chiang agreed to these terms then Mao and his leadership would put themselves under the command of Chiang for the duration of the war against Japan. The Communist Army would join with the Nationalists in a so-called 'United Front' to fight the Japanese invaders. Chang Hsueh-liang agreed with Chou that the war against the Japanese should take precedence and assured him that he had a personal score to settle with the invaders – it was only eight years since his father had been assassinated by the Japanese. He agreed to try and persuade Chiang Kai-shek to form a United Front and

A unit of Inner Mongolian Prince Teh Wang's 'elite' cavalry rides past during a parade in 1935. Most of the soldiers of the Inner Mongolian Army which fought Nationalist troops in the Suiyuan Campaign in 1936 were either ex-bandits or poorly trained volunteers. In 1937 these same troops fought alongside the Japanese as they took over the province as part of their full-scale invasion of northern China.

prepared to go to meet the Nationalist leader. However, before he could set off one of his subordinates suggested that the only way that Chiang would agree to the alliance with the Communists was by coercion.

When he found out that Chiang Kai-shek was on his way to Sian to confront Chang over his suspected dealings with the Communists, Chang decided that he must kidnap Chiang when he arrived at Sian and force him to listen to reason. Chiang arrived in Sian in early December but Chang at first backed down from arresting him. The decision was taken

These well-drilled Nationalist soldiers perform bayonet training on the parade ground in the summer of 1936. Chiang Kai-shek still insisted at this time in using his better troops like these to fight the Communists instead of facing up to the Japanese. All the men are armed with shortened versions of the German Mauser 98k rifle which were produced under licence in Belgium and Czechoslovakia for the Chinese Army.

out of his hands when General Yang Fu-cheng decided to act in the early hours of 12 December. He seized Chiang Kai-shek and his bodyguard and ensured any troops in the vicinity of Sian who might be loyal to the Nationalist leader were confined to their barracks. Chiang attempted to escape during his kidnapping and was badly injured when he had his first meeting with Chang Hsueh-liang. Chang had recovered his resolve and confronted Chiang with his demands for an alliance with the Communists. Chiang rejected his proposal and demanded that he be returned to Nanking without delay. Two days later Chang finally put his eight-point agreement to Chiang, which the latter rejected, refusing to even discuss it as long as he was being held prisoner. Chang then called in Chou En-lai to help him negotiate with Chiang and discussions between the two former enemies went on for several days.

Following skilful negotiation from Chou, Chiang seemed to become more receptive to the plan for the United Front. An agreement of sorts was reached and Chiang was allowed to fly back to Nanking on 25 December. He took with him Chang, who honourably agreed to be punished for his part in the kidnapping. Chang was symbolically sentenced to ten years under house arrest and then pardoned within 24 hours. Surprisingly Chiang began further negotiations with the Communists and an agreement was reached in early 1937. Under the agreement Communist troops would serve in the Nationalist Army but would be kept in their own units. Although segregated into their own divisions they would be under the orders of the Nationalist high command. Although the agreement had been signed by Chiang under duress he realized that the kidnappers did represent a large section of public opinion. The public's growing outrage against the

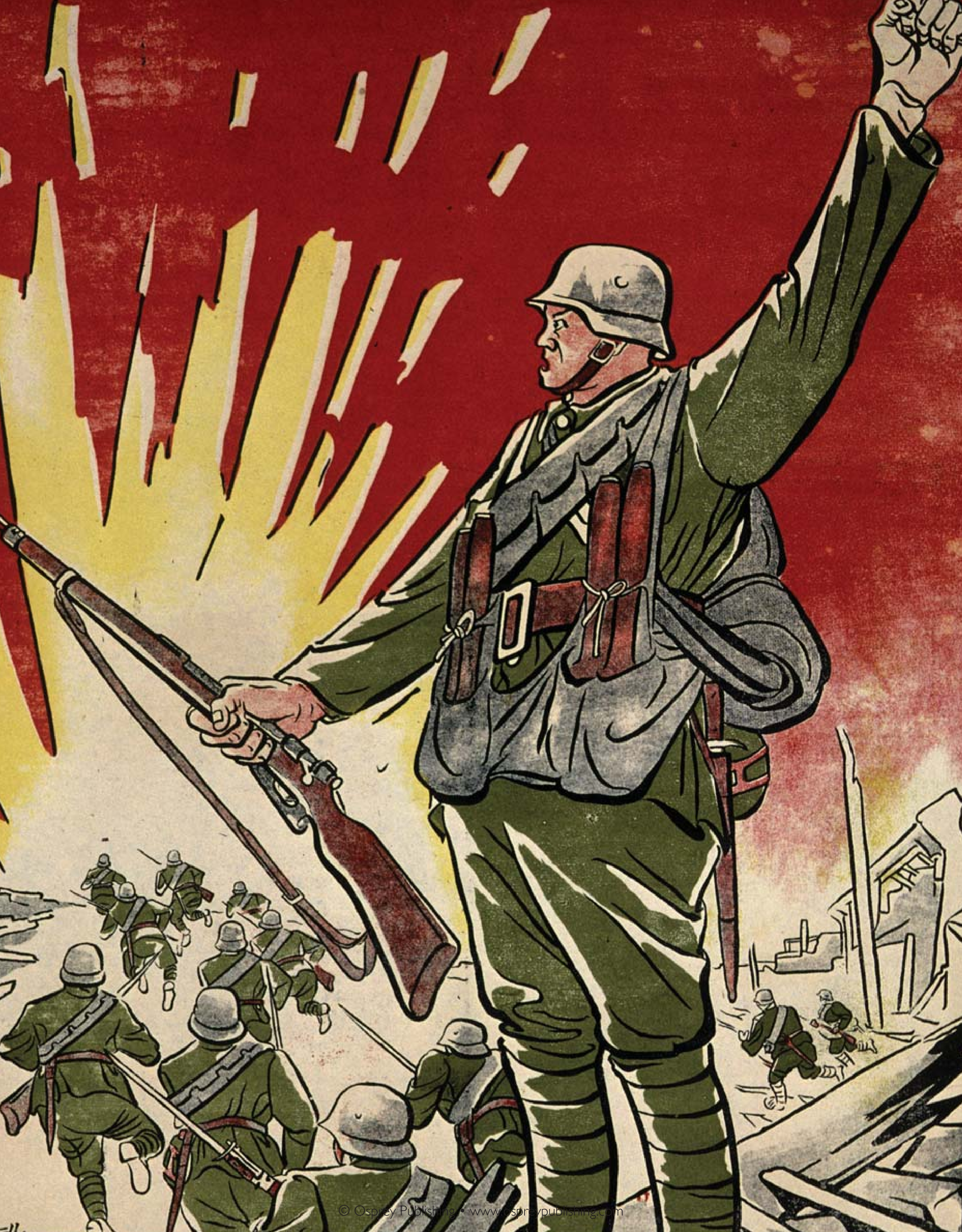
Japanese and their dismay at Chiang's soft attitude towards the aggression may well have forced him to agree to the United Front.

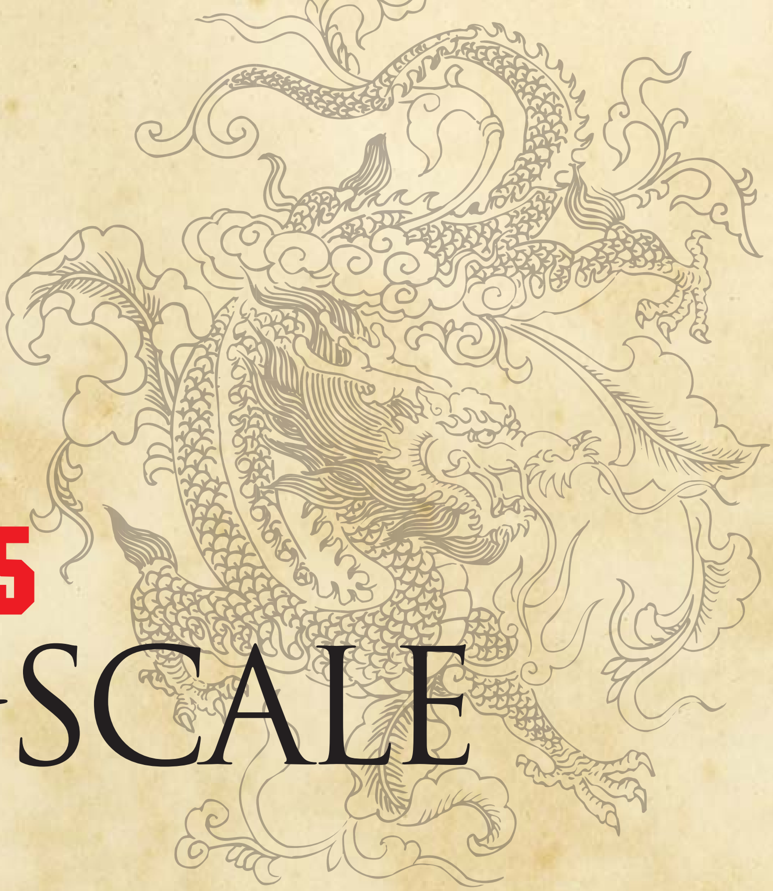
THE NATIONALIST ARMY 1936–37

The 1,700,000-strong Chinese Army was still much divided in 1936. Although Chiang could rely on the forces of his core divisions, the rest of the army was firmly under the control of its individual commanders. The government in Nanking had very little control over substantial armies in provinces like Kwangsi and Szechwan. For instance, in Szechwan General Liu Hsiang was still buying British aircraft for his own 'independent' air force against Chiang Kai-shek's explicit orders in 1936.

With Chinese commanders buying and often producing their own weaponry, any central arms-buying policy was pointless. General Liu was producing German-model anti-aircraft guns and trench mortars as well as Czechoslovakian small arms in his arsenals which added to the problem of the lack of standardization in the Nationalist Army. Chiang had tried to modernize the Nationalist Army in the early- to mid-1930s by importing modern artillery and anti-aircraft guns from Germany and Sweden. The German guns included 48 105mm and 44 150mm field guns and Swedish weaponry included 72 Bofors 75mm mountain guns. Small numbers of light tanks, tankettes and scout cars were purchased from Germany, Britain and Italy. The first NRA armoured units had been formed during the Northern Expedition of 1926–28, but the first organized units were raised in 1932. By the mid-1930s there were enough armoured vehicles to form the 1st Armoured Battalion with 32 British Carden-Lloyd Model amphibious tanks. The 2nd Armoured Battalion had 20 British Vickers 6-ton tanks and four Carden-Lloyd M1936 light tanks, as well as a handful of Carden-Lloyd tankettes purchased in 1929. A 3rd Battalion had a mixture of ten German PzKpfw I light tanks and 20 Italian CV-33 tankettes. Small arms bought by Chiang's government came mainly from Czechoslovakia, Belgium and Germany with the Mauser 98k becoming the standard rifle for the Nationalist Army.

As part of his modernization plans Chiang also decided to employ a larger number of German military advisors. Chiang had always employed foreign military advisors, the first being the Soviet instructors at the Whampoa Military Academy in the mid-1920s, and then a few German advisors in the late 1920s. The arrival of retired General Hans von Seekt and his military mission in 1933 allowed a training programme for the Nationalist Army to be instigated. Seekt had been responsible for the superb organization of the 100,000-strong Army of the German Weimer Republic after 1918. Under Seekt's leadership the Chinese Mission grew to 61 staff in 1933 and to 70 advisors at its height in 1935. When von Seekt left China in 1936 due to ill health he was replaced by the equally capable General Alexander von Falkenhausen. The plan was for the mission to eventually train 20 infantry divisions by 1937–38, which were to be equipped by German munitions factories. An even more ambitious plan was for the expansion of the military mission so they could organize and train all of the army, navy and air force by the early 1940s. Nazi Germany's new-found friendship with the Japanese from 1936–37 was to affect these plans and led the number of military advisors being reduced to 30 by the start of 1938 with the rest leaving China that July. During their time in China the mission had managed to fully train eight infantry divisions including the 'elite' 83rd, 87th and 88th divisions. These divisions were to form the backbone of the Nationalist Army during its first year of war against Japan.





CHAPTER 5

FULL-SCALE WAR

1937–41

Between the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in August 1937 and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, China stood alone against Imperial Japan. For over four years the ill-equipped Nationalist Army and Communist guerrilla forces faced up to the Japanese Imperial Army. They had to contend with a seasoned military force which had been at war somewhere in Asia almost continually since 1894. During those 40 or so years the Japanese Imperial Army had become one of the most efficient in the world. They had spent the 1920s and early 1930s invading and then occupying outlying provinces of China. They were now ready to invade the heart of the country and see how far their advances might take them.

Opposite page
This dramatic Nationalist patriotic poster from 1937 features the Chinese Army going into battle against the invading Japanese. The defiant soldier in the foreground with clenched fist proclaims: 'Enemies cannot waver our determination to bring the war against Japan to an end'. Posters like this were put up in the towns and cities of China in an effort to increase the people's morale.

THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND SINO-JAPANESE WAR

Throughout the 1930s, pressure had been building up between the Japanese and China which in July 1937 led to the inevitable outbreak of a full-scale war. Chiang Kai-shek had decided sometime in early 1937 that the next provocation by the Japanese would be answered with a determined military force. The Nationalist government had endured a never-ending series of humiliations at the hands of the Japanese since the invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Chiang knew that any further concessions by his government would make his position as Chinese leader untenable in the eyes of the people. His plan to resist any further Japanese aggression was based on the idea that Japan's economy was in such a precarious state that they could only sustain a full-scale war against China for six months to a year.

Isolated and censured by the US and the European powers, the Japanese thought that they had nothing to lose by accelerating the conflict. The positions of both Japan and China were hardening with the Japanese war minister, General Hajime Sugiyama, saying 'Crush the Chinese in three months and they will sue for peace'. His Chinese counterpart, General Ho Ying-chin, warned the Japanese military attaché in Nanking before the outbreak of fighting in 1937, 'If war breaks out, both Japan and the Chinese Republic will be defeated and only the Russian and Chinese Communists will benefit. If you don't believe it now you will in ten years.' He asked the attaché to pass on this warning to his superiors and also added that whatever the Japanese thought, the Chinese 'would fight to the last man'. The Japanese were confident that they could defeat the Nationalists within three months and did not hide their contempt for the fighting ability of the Chinese Army. They had seriously miscalculated, underestimating both the resolution of Chiang Kai-shek and the civilian population's will to resist further aggression.

On 7 July 1937, an incident took place between the Chinese 29th Army and a Japanese battalion stationed south-west of Peking. This local clash, which began when a Japanese soldier went missing while on patrol, was given the name the Marco Polo Incident after the Sung Dynasty bridge near where it broke out. As they had done before, the Japanese used the incident as a pretext for launching large-scale aggressions against the Chinese. Within a few days heavy fighting had broken out and the Japanese cabinet in Tokyo approved the despatch of five divisions. A local truce was arranged and for a short while it looked like things would return to the status quo. But Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government were tired of the Japanese pin-prick infringements on Chinese territory

Opposite page
A Nationalist soldier waits in his trench on the northern Chinese front for the attack of the Japanese Imperial Army in September 1937. He is armed interestingly with a Japanese Arisaka Type 98 rifle, supplied to China during the 1920s. The Chinese Army in 1937 was armed with a wide variety of rifles with the German Mauser and Gew 88s being the most common types in service.

and for once took decisive action. Four Nationalist divisions were moved up to the vicinity of the incident and the commander of the 29th Army was told not to accept the conditions of the truce. At first the Japanese Kwangtung Army commanders thought that Chiang was bluffing by not agreeing to the truce but hostilities soon spread. Shortly afterwards fighting spiralled out of control and by early August it had spread to Shanghai and the Japanese had advanced into Hopei province in northern China. Chinese aircraft attempted to bomb the Japanese ships moored at Shanghai on 14 August and from then on there was no going back –

a full–scale war was inevitable. Both sides began preparations to send more troops into the area with the Japanese War Ministry mobilizing five divisions. At the same time Chiang made several defiant speeches in which he said that as far as Japan was concerned, enough was enough. In one such speech he stated, 'If we allow one more inch of our territory to be lost we shall be guilty of an unpardonable crime against our race'.

AP
WIREPHOTO

A column of Nationalist troops marches up to the front line near Peking on 7 September 1937, ready to engage the invading Japanese Imperial Army. The men belong to the 29th Army Corps and are bristling with weaponry including rifles, fighting swords and potato-masher hand grenades. Few of these young soldiers would survive the early fighting as they went into action with little support and were outgunned by the Japanese.

THE CHINESE ARMIES IN 1937

The Chinese Nationalist Army that readied itself for full-scale war with Japan in 1937 was a large unwieldy force made up predominately of infantry with not enough artillery, trucks or armour. Chiang Kai-shek was not ignorant of the weaknesses of his army, navy and air force, and he had tried his best to improve them during the 1930s.

Chiang was also well aware of the doubtful loyalty of many of his commanders and their troops and would have agreed with the assessment made by US analyst Frederick Field on the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. In July 1937, Field wrote a breakdown of the perceived loyalty to Chiang Kai-shek of the Nationalist Army's units.[8] He split the army into six categories with 1 being the most loyal units and 6 the least loyal. Category 1 contained 380,000 troops who were described as being 'directly controlled by Chiang'. The divisions and armies in this section were the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 13th, 16th and 25th Route armies and the1st–4th and 9th Nanking divisions. The second category was 520,000 strong and were described as 'traditionally loyal to Chiang Kai-shek'. Armies in this category were the 4th, 7th (formerly the famous 19th which defended Shanghai in 1932), 11th, 15th, 17th and 26th Route armies. Field said that third 3rd category of Nationalist units were 'semi-autonomous provincial troops which Chiang could nevertheless command'. These

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[8] Frederick Field, *Amerasia Journal* (September 1937).

Nationalist troops parade before going to the front, during the first few days of the Second Sino-Japanese War in July 1937. Many of them are armed with Japanese Arisaka Type 98 rifles supplied to the northern warlords in the 1920s. The Chinese Army used many types of rifle and machine gun in the 1930s, which made the logistics of supplying new ammunition almost impossible.

included the 19th, 33rd, 34th and 35th Shansi-Suiyuan armies which were commanded by General Yen Hsi-shan, the former rival of Chiang, and totalled 120,000 men. Also in this third category were the 80,000 Shantung troops in the 3rd Route Army and 100,000 Kwangtung troops. In the category fourth were formations which Field described as 'practically autonomous provincial troops which can be controlled by Chiang only in a national anti-Japanese campaign'. In other words the loyalty of these troops would only last until the Japanese were totally defeated. This category was made up of troops from Hopei province made up of the 29th, 33rd, 32nd, 53rd and 63rd armies. Also included in this category were the remnants of the former North-East Army which until 1936 had been under the command of Chang Hsueh-liang. His arrest after the Sian Incident meant that most of the troops of his 16 divisions had dubious loyalty to Chiang. The 16 divisions comprised the 107th–120th, 129th, 130th and five cavalry divisions. The fith category was made up of the most autonomous of the provincial troops and again included formations under the command of former anti-Chiang rebels. These included the 60,000 regulars and 90,000 irregulars from Kwangsi province as well as the 10th Route Army from Yunnan province. Last and according to Field, definitely least, were the approximately 250,000 Szechwan soldiers. He describes these soldiers from south-western China as 'China's worst troops – worst from every point of view: equipment, discipline, training and loyalty'. The total number of troops of dubious loyalty – which Field put in categories three, four and five – was 1,000,0000. In Field's sixth and final category were placed the Red Army and the remaining 'North-Eastern Anti-Japanese Allied Forces'. He estimated the Red Army at 150,000 men and the anti-Japanese irregulars in Manchuria at the same number. By the time Field wrote his article however, the irregulars in Manchuria had been almost totally

Opposite page
Formal portrait of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in his dress uniform adorned with the medals and awards given to him by the Nationalist government. Chiang symbolized the Chinese resistance to the Japanese and earned him the grudging respect of his enemy. His stubborn refusal to make peace with the Japanese ensured that even when facing certain defeat China continued to resist the invader until the opening of the wider war in Asia in 1941–42.

defeated and 150,000 is probably an overestimate. Although he says that the Communists would play an important role in the defence of China he could not have guessed the split which would occur in the Nationalist–Communist United Front after 1941.

THE NATIONALIST AIR FORCE 1937–41

When Japan invaded China in July 1937, the Nationalist Air Force had grown to a paper strength of 600 aircraft of all types. The reality was pretty stark as only 268 were combat aircraft, with the rest being trainers, transports and reconnaissance aircraft. Even more worrying was that out of the combat aircraft only 91 were considered to be modern types capable of taking on the Japanese. Chiang Kai-shek had assumed that the money he had spent during the 1930s to build up the Nationalist Air Force had been well spent. Now, on the eve of war, he realized that there were too few aircraft and too many types of aircraft in service. There were three fighter or 'Pursuit' groups, with the 4th and 5th having three squadrons of US-made Hawk II fighters in each. The 3rd Group however had a different type of fighter in each of its three squadrons with one having the Hawk II, another having the Italian Fiat CR32 and the third having the US Boeing 281 fighter. Bomber squadrons were divided into heavy and light bombers with one heavy squadron having the German Heinkel-111 and the other heavy bomber unit having the Italian Savoia S72.

There were eight squadrons of light bombers which were equipped with a mixture of US Douglas O2s, Northrop Gammas and a few Italian Fiat BR3s. The nine reconaissance squadrons were again equipped with a mixture of US-supplied aircraft with three having the Douglas O2s and four having the Curtiss Hawk III. Finally there were two attack squadrons with US Vought Corsair bombers and a HQ Group in Canton with Breda 27 fighters and Caproni 101 transport planes. The wide variety of types of aircraft and the fact that many were coming to the end of their useful life did not bode well for the war with Japan. When the fighting started the Nationalist pilots flew their aircraft bravely and several became war heroes because of their exploits. On 14 August 1937, the Nationalist Air Force launched an air offensive against the invading Japanese and during that month flew 409 sorties, inflicting heavy losses on the unescorted bombers of the Imperial Air Force. Attrition was high on both the Chinese and Japanese during the first few months of fighting in July–December 1937

The Nationalist Air Force crew of a Soviet-supplied Tupolev SB-3 medium bomber receive instructions before setting off on a mission. Chinese aircraft in the 1930s came mainly from the USA and the Soviet Union, who sent the Nationalists a total of 292 of these amongst other types between 1937 and 1941.

but the latter could bring in more aircraft. Nationalist losses in aircraft and pilots were not replaceable in the short term and new aircraft arrived in small numbers during the 1937–38 period. New Soviet aircraft like the I-15 and I-16 fighters supplied during this time were used in the defence of several Chinese cities but usually to no avail. During the defence of Wuhan in 1938 for instance, the Nationalists lost 202 aircraft and 132 pilots were killed and another 152 wounded. During the same battle a force of 29 I-15s and I-16s attacked a Japanese force of 12 bombers with an escort of 26 fighters. The Chinese managed to shoot down 14 enemy aircraft although they suffered heavy casualties themselves. As the war continued the Japanese

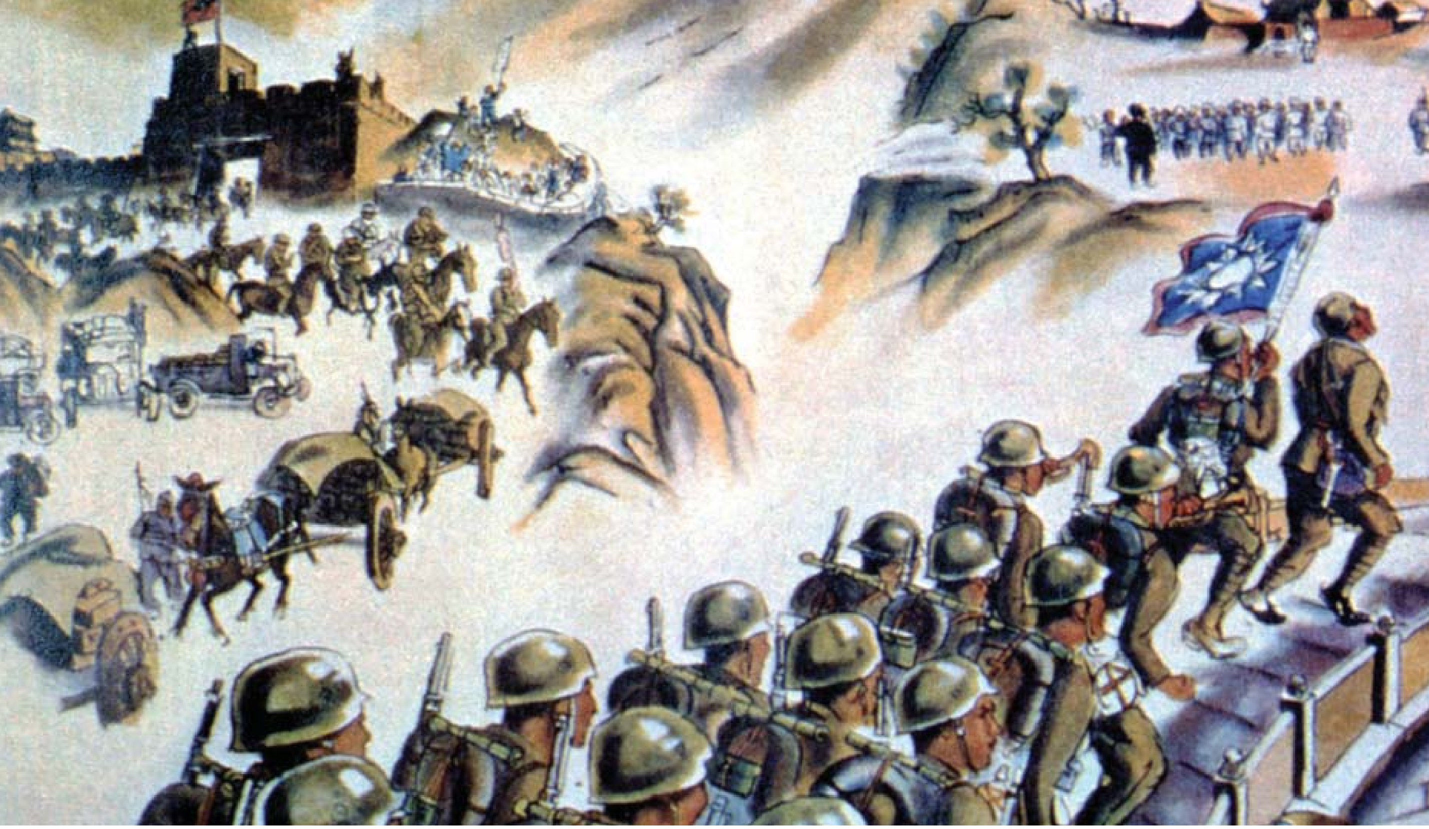
Army and Naval Air Forces grew stronger and received more and more modern aircraft. These included the famous Mitsubishi A6M 'Zero' fighter which dominated the skies over China from 1940.

JAPAN'S INVASION OF NORTH CHINA AND INNER MONGOLIA 1937

During the first few weeks of the Sino-Japanese War the conflict was contained in the northern Chinese provinces. At first it appeared that the Japanese Kwangtung Army was looking at detaching the provinces of Hopei and Chahar from the rest of China. The Japanese military expected this would be quickly achieved and that Chiang Kai-shek would accept the situation. After all he had vehemently complained every time that the Japanese had violated his country's territory since 1931, before being forced to accept the situation.

Kwangtung Army units advanced towards Tientsin from their positions at Shanhaikuan Pass while other units moved towards the old capital, Peking. They were faced around Peking by the poorly-armed soldiers of the Nationalist 29th Army under General Sung Che-yuan. On 29 July the Japanese population of the city of Tungchow to the east of Peking was massacred. Tungchow was the supposed capital of the pro-Japanese East Hopei regime set up with Japan's support in 1935. Mutinous former 'puppet' troops were responsible for killing the Japanese civilians and the next day, when the Japanese took the city, the Chinese population was in turn massacred. On 31 July, the Kwangtung Army entered Peking but there was no killing spree and the occupation of the city was orderly. After taking Peking the Japanese Imperial Army was to advance along the three main railways going north–west and south.

At the same time that the Japanese were advancing through northern China they were also moving to conquer the provinces that made up Inner Mongolia. After the failure of the campaigns of the previous year the Imperial Army was determined to crush all resistance in the region. The Japanese 'Chahar Expeditionary Force' was made up of three mixed brigades of Japanese troops with 50 light and medium tanks and 12 armoured cars. The Japanese were supported by nine divisions of irregular Mongolian cavalry, some of who had fought in the Suiyuan Campaign in 1936. They advanced into Chahar province to the west of Jehol and took the city of Kalgan on 3 September. Japanese units then advanced



In this section from a larger propaganda painting of 1937 the Chinese Nationalist Army advances to meet the threat of the Japanese invader. In the background civilians help transport the supplies to the front and the cavalry arrive to join the attack. At the head of the column of troops flies the Nationalist Army flag with red border, blue field and with the white sun emblem in the centre.

Opposite page
Nationalist officers pore over a map during the early stages of the Second Sino-Japanese War in July 1937. Good officers in the Chinese Army led from the front and for that reason suffered proportionally heavy casualties during the first year of fighting against the Japanese. These losses could not be replaced although the training given by the Allies after 1942 helped.

southwards into the neighbouring province of Shansi, controlled since 1917 by the ‘Model Governor’ General Yen Hsi-shan. Some of Yen’s 120,000 troops had fought well against the Inner Mongolian Army during the Suiyuan Campaign in 1936 but the Japanese were a different matter. The Shansi soldiers were shocked by the power of the Japanese force and most retreated after putting up a token resistance. One of Yen’s shell-shocked officers was quoted as saying:

> I tell you it was terrible, we never saw the Japanese. The planes came again and again–bom. Bom! and the big guns; they killed thousands of us. And the tanks and the armoured cars…[9]

This quote could easily sum up the thoughts of many Nationalist soldiers during the first months of the Japanese invasion.

However, as the Japanese moved through Shansi, one of their units got a nasty shock when it came across a unit of Communist troops from the 8th Route Army. A supply column of the Japanese 5th Division was moving through Pinghsingkuan Pass on 25 September 1937. Defending the mountain pass was the 9,000-strong Communist 115th Division,

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[9] James. M Bertram, *First Act In China* (1938).

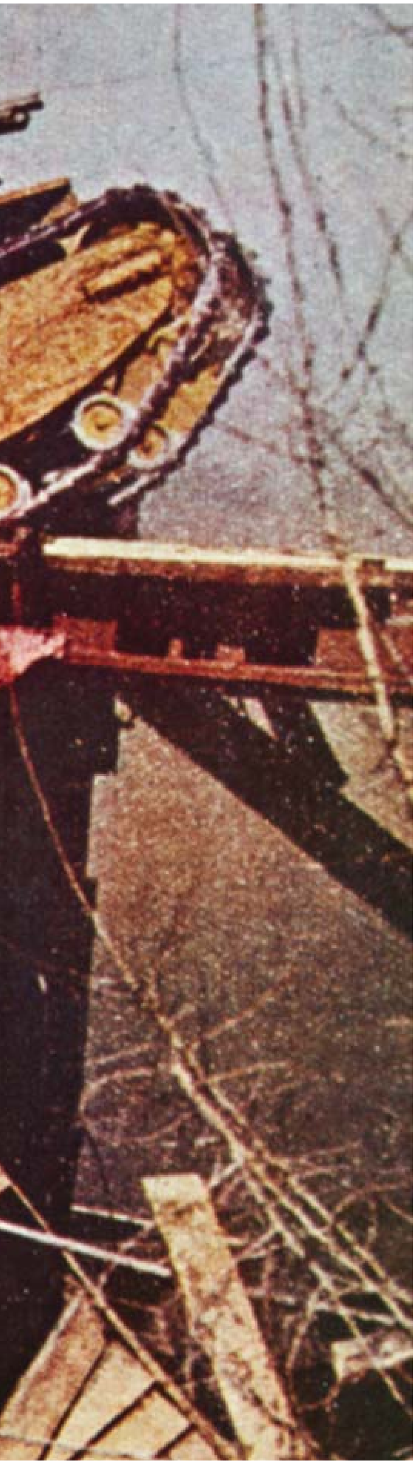
under the command of Lin Pao, which had moved out of its Shensi base to attack the Japanese. The large motorized column advanced without undertaking a proper reconnaissance of the pass and fell into a trap. Lin's troops attacked the column from their positions on the heights above them and killed 3,000 Japanese and captured 100 trucks. In a sign of the nature of the fighting between the Chinese and Japanese all prisoners and wounded were killed in revenge for earlier outrages. The fighting illustrated how a well-organized Chinese guerrilla campaign against the Japanese from the beginning of the fighting could have worn the Japanese down. Regardless of the odd setback such as this the, Japanese continued their advance through Shansi and by late October they were approaching the provincial capital of Taiyuan. The Japanese had defeated the Chinese on

A Browning machine-gun crew of the Communist 115th Division fires at trapped Japanese troops during the fighting for Pinghsingkuan Pass in September 1937. This classic guerrilla operation by the Communists resulted in over 3,000 Japanese casualties. If the hundreds of thousands of Nationalist troops lost in 1937–38 in conventional battles had been switched to guerrilla warfare the Japanese would have suffered many more defeats like this.

the road to Taiyuan in battles at Shihchiachuang and Niangtzukuan which allowed them to surround the city from the south. When the walled city was besieged its defenders were made up of the 14th Army Group but most of its troops abandoned their positions. The remaining Chinese troops, under the command of General Fu Tso-yi (the victor of the 1936 Suiyuan Campaign), fought hard against the Japanese attackers. When the city finally fell on 9 November the Japanese took out their frustrations on the population. Meanwhile, in Suiyuan province to the north, a Japanese force had taken the capital Kweisui on 14 October and then the city of Paotou on the 17th. This now meant that the whole of Inner Mongolia was in Japanese hands and Prince Teh Wang could finally be installed as leader of the new 'independent' state. While this secondary campaign had been going on in the north-western provinces of China the main battle was being fought in the city of Shanghai.

THE BATTLE OF SHANGHAI

The battle for Shanghai started with a minor clash between Chinese troops and a few Japanese marines on 9 August 1937. This skirmish gave the Japanese the excuse to land 4,000 marines in the city and to send a flotilla of warships including cruisers, destroyers and an aircraft carrier into the Whangpoo River. Japan claimed that it had a right to reinforce its forces in the Shanghai area and to defend its citizens living in the city. The forces faced each other across a 'no man's land' at Hongkew just north of the international concessions and began firing on 12 August. The Japanese were outnumbered by the Chinese forces. They were reinforced on 23 August, but these reinforcements were met by Chinese resistance at Woosung where they landed. A further 20,000 Japanese troops landed a few days later at Liuho and the three forces tried to link up with each other under heavy Chinese attacks. Surprisingly the Japanese struggled against the determined Chinese defence and several frontal assaults by the Imperial marines ended in failure and heavy casualties. More and more Japanese were thrown into the battle with the entrenched Chinese troops at Hongkew and Lotien providing stubborn resistance. On 13 September the Chinese withdrew to prepared positions further inland where they continued to resist Japanese attacks. As the Japanese gradually increased their forces in Shanghai throughout September to a total of 100,000 the Chinese also sent in huge numbers of fresh troops. Chiang decided to



A Japanese Type 89 medium tank with supporting infantry crosses a hastily repaired bridge during the advance on Shanghai in August 1937. Although Japanese tanks were not as advanced as those in service with some European armies they faced little opposition in China.

commit some of his best German-trained divisions, like the 87th and 88th, with their superior training and equipment to the battle. As the fighting for Shanghai continued into October the Japanese now had about 200,000 men committed to the battle. Chiang had sent a staggering 71 divisions totalling 500,000 men into Shanghai as the battle developed into a bloody stalemate. According to some sources the Chinese Army had already lost 130,000 men by mid-October.

On paper the Japanese held all the advantages in the battle as they had total superiority in heavy artillery and their aircraft controlled the air above the city. They also had a large number of ships both off the coast and on the Yangtze River which could join in the bombardment of the Chinese positions. With these ships they could easily have landed forces behind Chinese static positions to outflank them. However, for some reason they continued with their costly frontal assaults against the well-prepared Chinese positions. The Chinese defenders had created a strong defensive system with well-dug trenches and they had built a series of concrete pillboxes and anti-tank ditches. They had also learned to utilize the terrain around Shanghai with its many creeks and canals to create defence lines. Open ground was covered with barbed wire and mines and with railway rails facing towards the Japanese positions. The Chinese still made some mistakes however, such as when they didn't position enough machine guns to cover the open ground. They also often left open un-mined fields next to their fortifications which allowed the Japanese to outflank them. Despite the high morale of the Chinese and their repeated repulses of Japanese attack, the war of attrition was taking its toll. Japanese heavy artillery bombardments with 14-inch siege guns and non-stop air attacks had inflicted heavy casualties on the Chinese. In addition

Japanese troops fire their Arisaka rifles and Type 11 light machine guns through holes dug into the wall of a building during the fighting for Shanghai in August–October 1937. The battle for the important city of Shanghai cost both the Japanese and Chinese heavily with the Imperial Army suffering 9,000 deaths and 40,000 wounded in the first ten weeks of the fighting. Chinese casualties are estimated to have reached up to 300,000 as the best of the Nationalist Army's German-trained divisions were destroyed.

the Japanese had begun to use their tanks and flamethrowers against the Chinese entrenchments. With few field guns and even fewer shells to fire from them, the Chinese had little answer to the Japanese bombardments. They began to launch their own suicidal attacks on Japanese positions which only resulted in heavier casualties.

Finally, on 25 October, the Japanese broke through the Chinese defences. Although the defenders recovered and retook some positions, further attacks followed. This time the Japanese used their outflanking tactics and landed two divisions of troops on the coast at Chingsan behind Chinese lines on 7 November. The Japanese advanced inland against light resistance and further landings were made which broke the morale of the Chinese. An orderly withdrawal by the Chinese gradually deteriorated into a disorderly retreat. The Chinese had fought courageously against heavy Japanese attacks for two months but in the end inequality in weaponry finally told.

Casualties on the Chinese side were horrendous with a estimated 300,000 killed and wounded during the battle. The Japanese losses of 70,000 killed and 22,620 wounded were unacceptable to the Imperial Army who had expected an easy victory in China. In addition, the modern German PAK 37mm anti-tank guns of the Nationalists were reported to have accounted for over 100 Japanese tanks and armoured cars. Although the Chinese Nationalist Army had fought well during the battle it had lost its best units and equipment. Even more seriously the battle cost the Chinese Army about 10,000 of the 25,000 junior officers who had been trained by the Central Military Academy between 1929 and 1937. The Nationalists also lost thousands of other potential junior officers sacrificed in the defence of the city. The length of the Chinese resistance did at least allow the Nationalists to remove some of the vital war industries from Shanghai to the cities of Wuhan and Sian. When these cities were in turn attacked by the

Opposite page
A young Nationalist soldier from one of the German-trained divisions defending Shanghai is pictured on the cover of a pictorial magazine produced at the time. The caption at the bottom of the page reads 'Just tossing a grenade to check the enemy' and is typical of the propaganda used by the Chinese. Soldiers like this were wasted in the futile defence of the main cities of northern and eastern China which could not be held against the Japanese offensives of 1937–38.

Japanese, these would then be sent south-westwards to the new capital at Chungking. Although it was not possible to move a lot of war industries, some important factories and machinery were successfully removed and taken to Chungking. The battle and the determined resistance of the defenders ensured a little respite for other cities in China with the projected attack on Wuhan being delayed by almost a year.

THE FALL OF NANKING

After the fall of Shanghai Chiang Kai-shek realized that the defence of his capital at Nanking was impractical. His troops needed time to rest and re-organize, but there was no time as the Japanese Imperial Army were already advancing from Shanghai to Nanking. However, Chiang realized that for political reasons the city could not be surrendered without some kind of fight as it was both the Chinese capital and the site of Sun Yat-sen's tomb. Japanese formations involved in the battle for Nanking were the 6th, 9th and 12th divisions as well as a brigade from the 5th Division. These units were just part of the eight-division Japanese force – totalling 240,000 men – in the vicinity of the city. The Nationalist government had already begun evacuating its officials to Hankow and other cities like Chungking. Chiang himself flew out of Nanking on 7 December as the Japanese closed in on the city.

Nanking's defence was mostly to be left to hastily recruited and largely untrained conscripts and the surviving veterans of other battles, particularly those defenders of Shanghai who had withdrawn from the city before it fell. Many of these troops had retreated in front of the advancing Japanese to Nanking where they were absorbed into the 100,000-strong garrison. The commander of Nanking, General T'ang Sheng-chih, had prepared a two-stage defence of the city. He planned to firstly defend the outer suburbs and then withdraw to prepared positions within the city itself. T'ang declared to the world press that the city would not surrender and that he would 'fight to the death'. Nanking was surrounded by a wall 20 metres high and 10 metres thick, and machine-gun emplacements were placed on top. Trenches were also dug up to 30 miles outside the city and existing concrete and sandbagged positions were reinforced. The trench system was connected to the Yangtze River which protected the city from attack to the north and west. The ad hoc nature of Nanking's defence force led to a lack of cohesion in the hastily put together formations. This mixing-up of units

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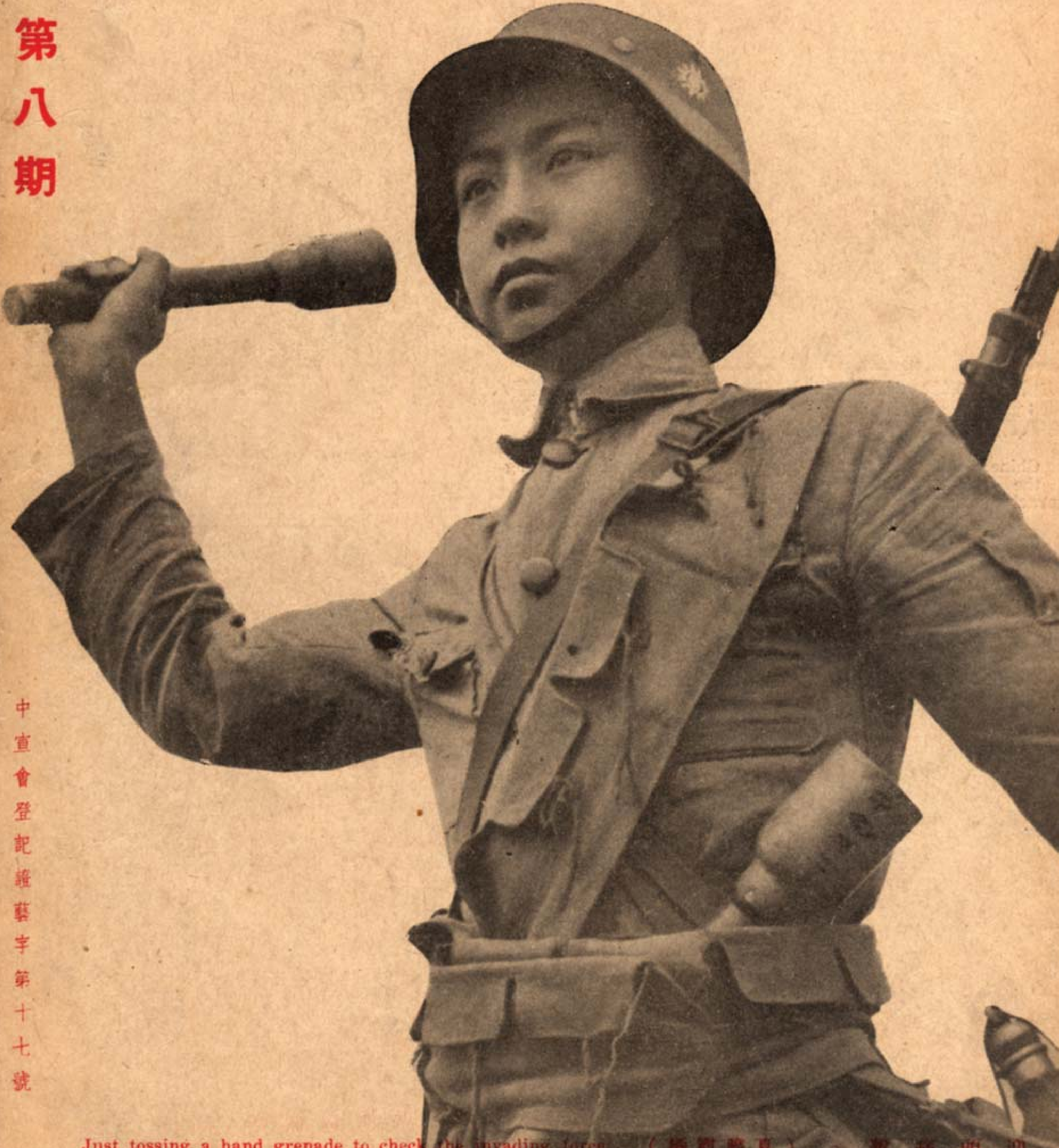


迎頭痛擊。（夏純錫攝）

Just tossing a hand grenade to check the invading force.

Opposite page
The Japanese treatment of captured Chinese soldiers and civilians was brutal, with little if any mercy shown. Japanese soldiers had been taught to treat the Chinese as lesser beings whose fate was of little consequence. Those Imperial soldiers who showed some humanity towards their captives were in a tiny minority and such behaviour was heavily discouraged by both their officers and their comrades.

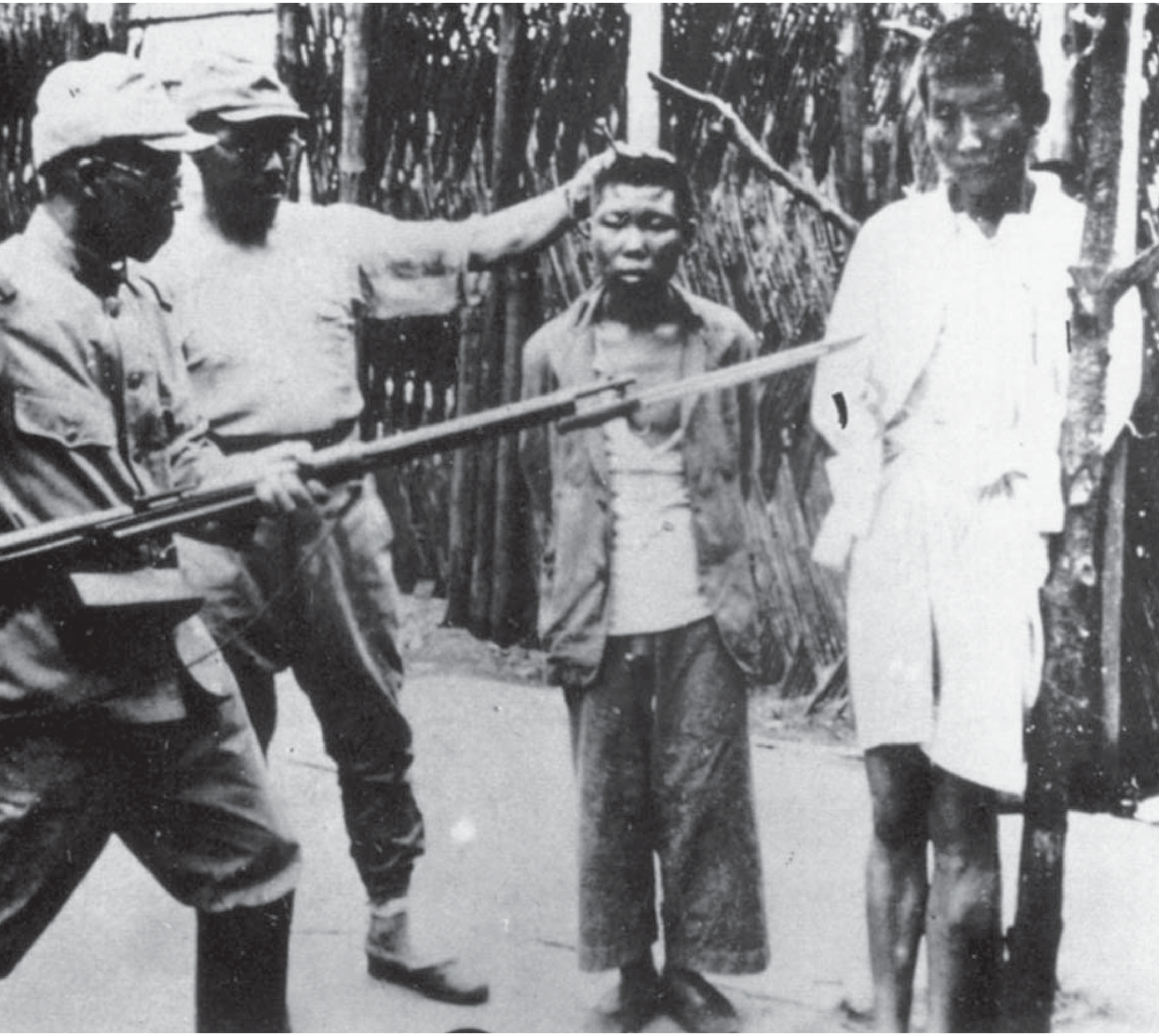
was to cause a great deal of confusion during the battle when troops fell out amongst themselves. There were two army corps – the 66th and 83rd – and seven infantry divisions in the garrison, but there were few heavy weapons apart from six anti-aircraft guns.

Chiang had always planned for the best units in the garrison to withdraw from the city before the Japanese arrived. One of his best divisions, the 88th, did engage the Japanese and successfully repulsed an assault on the city gates before being withdrawn to the south. The 88th was considered by Chiang to be worth saving for battles to come, even though its numbers had been reduced to 7,000 men, and of those 3,000 were poorly trained replacements for the losses suffered in Shanghai. The removal of the better Chinese units left the defence of the city to its ad hoc garrison. When the city fell thousands of these soldiers were trapped within the city walls. Hundreds of terrified defenders tried to cross the Yangtze River, many drowning in the attempt, while others simply waited for their fate at the hands of the Japanese.

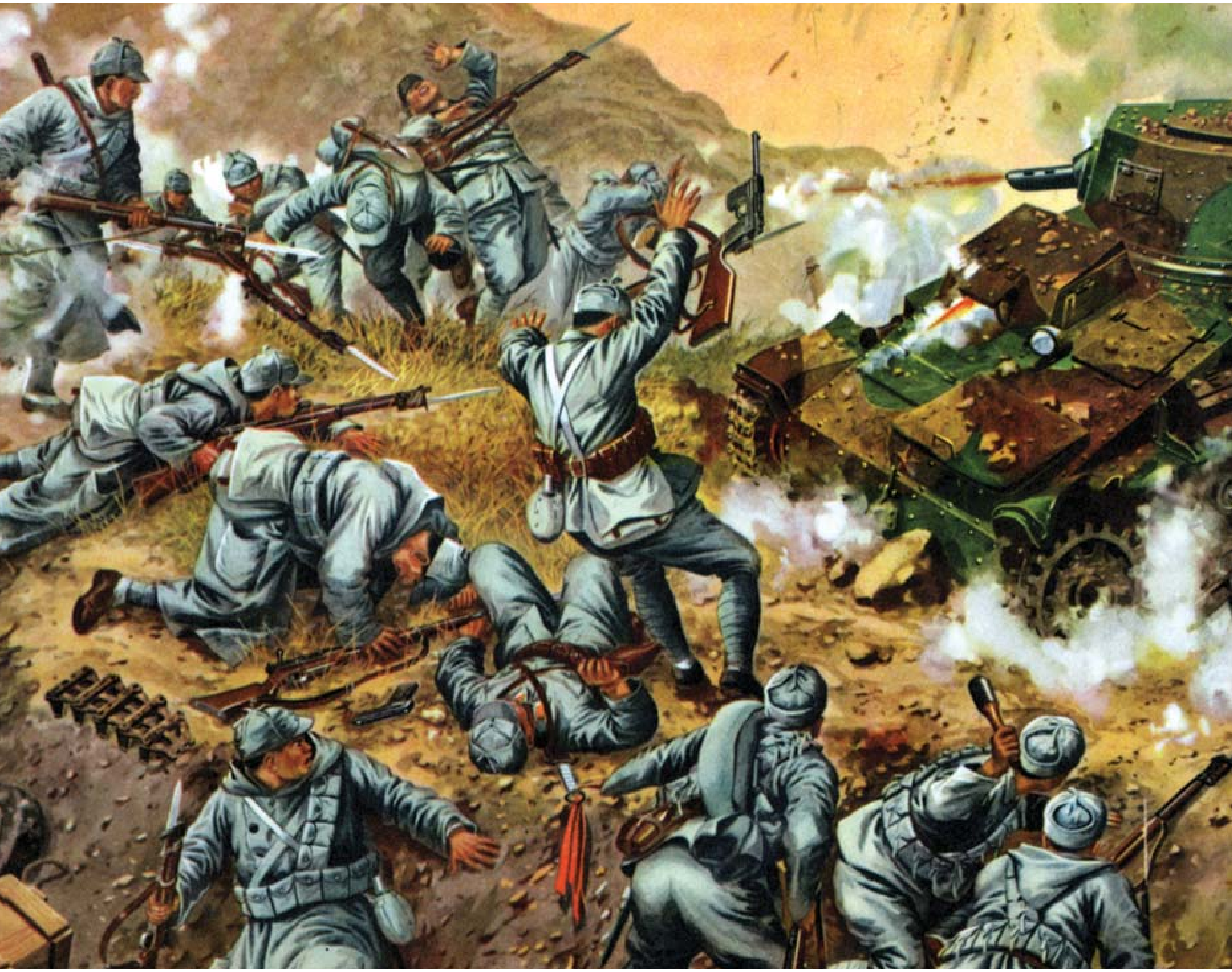
The 'Rape of Nanking'

When Nanking fell to the Japanese on 13 December, a chain of events then ensued which was described then and since as the 'Rape of Nanking'. During a six-week period the Japanese Imperial Army went on a rampage of murder, torture and rape. Soldiers and civilians alike were subjected to atrocities including shooting, beheading and being burned or buried alive. Japanese troops began their killing spree on the day the city fell, by machine-gunning all the Chinese soldiers that they had taken prisoner. One Japanese division alone killed 24,000 surrendered Chinese troops that first day by corralling prisoners into an enclosed area and then raking them with rifle and machine gun fire. Once they had dealt with the captured Nationalist soldiers and any male civilian who fell into their hands they started on the old, the women and the children.

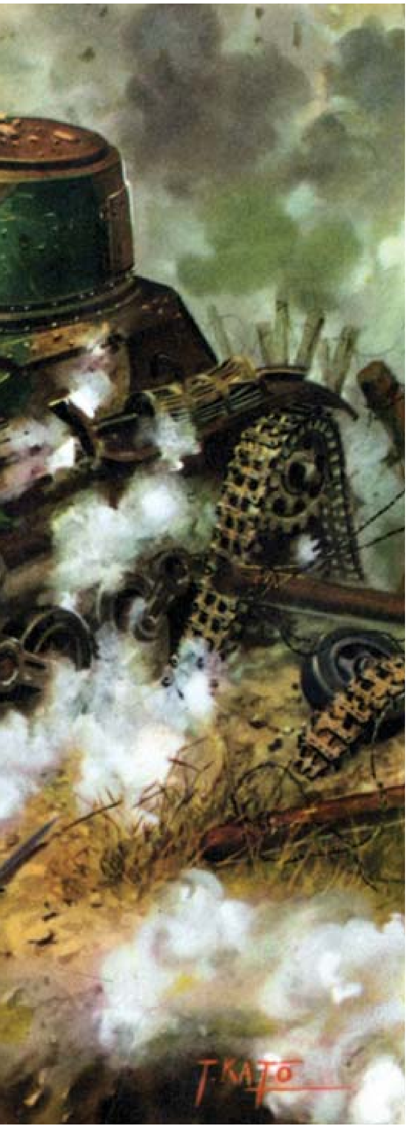
Although half of the city's population had fled before the fall, the remaining residents were subjected to weeks of indiscriminate murder, rape and torture. Many women and girls – from pre-pubescent children to old ladies in their eighties – were raped. Women were taken from the streets and from any hiding place, and gang-raped by Japanese soldiers often until they died from their treatment. Others were raped and then killed immediately by soldiers who often mutilated their corpses afterwards. Although some Japanese officers tried to stop the killings, their efforts were only half-hearted and in most cases they simply turned



a blind eye. Foreign residents of the city tried to save as many civilians as they could but their efforts too were often in vain. The sheer scale of the killings and other outrages was often too much for Westerners to grasp and there was little they could do apart from bear witness.



It was suggested both at the time and since that the only rationale for the atrocities in Nanking was that the Japanese were trying to shock Chiang Kai-shek and strike fear into his government, reasoning that the scale of the killings would force Chiang into negotiations. On 22 December the Japanese indeed did make a treaty proposal to Chiang, the terms of which were harsher than previous ones. To their surprise Chiang immediately rejected the Japanese terms and committed China to further resistance.

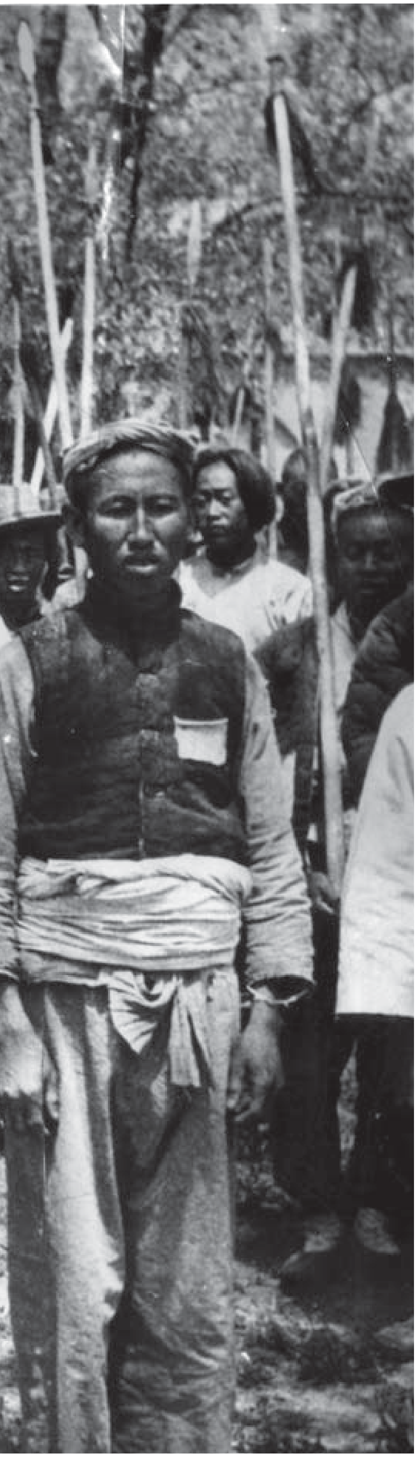


A typical Japanese propaganda picture from the late 1930s shows an isolated Japanese light tank whose brave crew are fighting to the last against 'swarms' of Chinese troops. In Japan the war in China was portrayed as a civilizing mission with the Imperial Army bringing order compared to the chaos of the Nationalist government. Images like this were meant to popularize the war by keeping the Japanese public interested in their army's exploits.

Whatever the reasons behind the atrocities it is almost certain that the Japanese government and the emperor himself had some knowledge of what was going on. Some of the outrages were even reported in the Japanese press and featured in newspapers as everyday occurrences. For instance, a beheading contest between two Japanese officers was featured in the newspapers as if they were sporting competitions. The two officers competed to see who could cut off the heads of 100 prisoners of war the quickest – but extended the number to 150 when they could not agree on the winner for the first total. Other prisoners were used for live bayonet practice by ordinary soldiers, often as part of their initiation into army life. When the rape of the city ended in early 1938 there were various estimates as to how many Nanking residents and soldiers had been killed. Although few people dispute that the outrages happened, some say that the scale of the killings were exaggerated. For obvious reasons it was difficult to get an exact figure of the dead, although the widely accepted total is somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000.

COMMUNIST FORCES 1937–41

After the Communists had settled into their new base in Shensi province in 1935 they numbered approximately 80,000 men. With the final signing of the United Front agreement against the Japanese in August 1937, some of the Communist forces were absorbed into the Nationalist Army. Three divisional-strength forces were given the designations of the 115th, 120th and 129th divisions and were grouped together as the 8th Route Army with a strength of 45,000 men in 1937. A year later the Route Army title was abolished and the 8th became part of the Nationalist 18th Group Army under the overall command of the Nationalist general Yen Hsi-shan. Even after the fall-out between the Communists and the Nationalist government, the three



Photographed in November 1938, these spear-toting guerrillas are auxiliary fighters of the Communist 8th Route Army. Despite being very poorly armed, they have been given the role of attacking the Japanese Army's supply lines, tearing up railway tracks and attacking isolated garrisons. All the guerrillas wear their own clothing while their officer wearing the field cap is the only one who has been issued with any uniform at all.

divisions kept their former title and wore the 18th Group Army insignia on their uniforms. The other large Communist formation under Nationalist command was formed from guerrillas who had stayed behind in Anhwei province rather than joining the 1934 Long March. These 12,000–14,000 men were formed into the New 4th Army in four detachments and also put under the command of the Nationalist Army. The commander of the 8th Route Army, General Chu Teh, was a well-regarded commander and tactician. He – as many Communist officers – had served in the army of a warlord and then in the National Revolutionary Army. His vice commander was Peng Teh-hwai and the army's representative at Chungking was Chou En-lai. The New 4th Army was commanded by General Yeh Ting who again was a former officer in the NRA. His field commander, Han Yung, had been left behind by the Red Army in Kiangsi when the Long March left the province in 1934. Besides the 8th Route Army and the New 4th Army there were other Communist regular and irregular formations which fought the Japanese after August 1937. Nearly all the ordinary soldiers of the Red Army were young men, most were in their early 20s, and some were also well-experienced fighters and veterans of the 1934–35 Long March. Most of the junior officers and political officers, and all of the higher-ranking officers, were also veterans of the march. The general morale of the Communists during this period was noted by many journalists who visited Yenan. Colonel Evans Carlson of the US Marine Corps was impressed by the general demeanour of the Red Army troops compared with the Nationalists. He noted that they had superior discipline to most Nationalist troops and commented that this came from within the soldier. He said that their attitude

Opposite page
This illustration from the front cover of a Japanese news magazine of 1938 shows a typical Imperial Army column advancing into a newly conquered Chinese town. By 1938 there were 34 divisions in the Imperial Army, an increase of ten from the previous year. These new divisions had been formed to supply the demand created by the fighting in China which did not show any sign of abating despite Japan's continuing victories.

to service in the Red Army could be summarized in the phrase: 'Each man possessed the desire to do what was right, it was right to perform his duty'.[10]

During the first four years that the Nationalists and the Communists fought against the Japanese, the latter expanded their forces as much as their meagre supply of arms would allow. By Japanese post-war estimates the Communists had 91,000 men in 1937, which had more than doubled to 181,700 in 1938. By 1939 the Communist forces had grown to 320,000 regular and irregular fighters and by 1940 this had grown again to 500,000. The Japanese North China Area Army in December 1939 had estimated Communist strength at 88,000 regular fighters, 160,000 full-time guerrillas and between 500,000 and 600,000 part-time guerrillas.

THE JAPANESE ARMY IN CHINA 1937–41

The Japanese military formation in China at the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in July 1937 was the China Garrison Army. This formation had served in China since the Boxer Rebellion and had been involved in the first fighting at the Marco Polo Bridge. On 26 August 1937, the China Garrison Army was re-formed into three formations, the Japanese 1st Army, the Japanese 2nd Army and the Japanese Northern China Area Army. In October 1937 the Shanghai Expeditionary Force (SEF) was reinforced by the 10th Army to create the Japanese Central China Area Army (CCAA). Established on 7 November, the new formation now had the following divisions: the 3rd, 6th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 13th, 16th, 18th, 101st and 114th. In November 1937, the Japanese government ordered the establishment of Imperial General Headquarters where the Emperor Hirohito met with his army and navy ministers and chiefs of staff in recognition of the fact that the China Incident had escalated into full-scale war.

In addition to these field armies within China herself there was the Kwangtung Army in Manchuria, or 'Manchukuo' as it was now called. There was also the North China Army of about 280,000 men, which was fighting in Hopei and Shansi provinces, and the China Expeditionary Army in the Yangtze River region with 260,000 men. In September 1939, the China Expeditionary Army was formed by merging the

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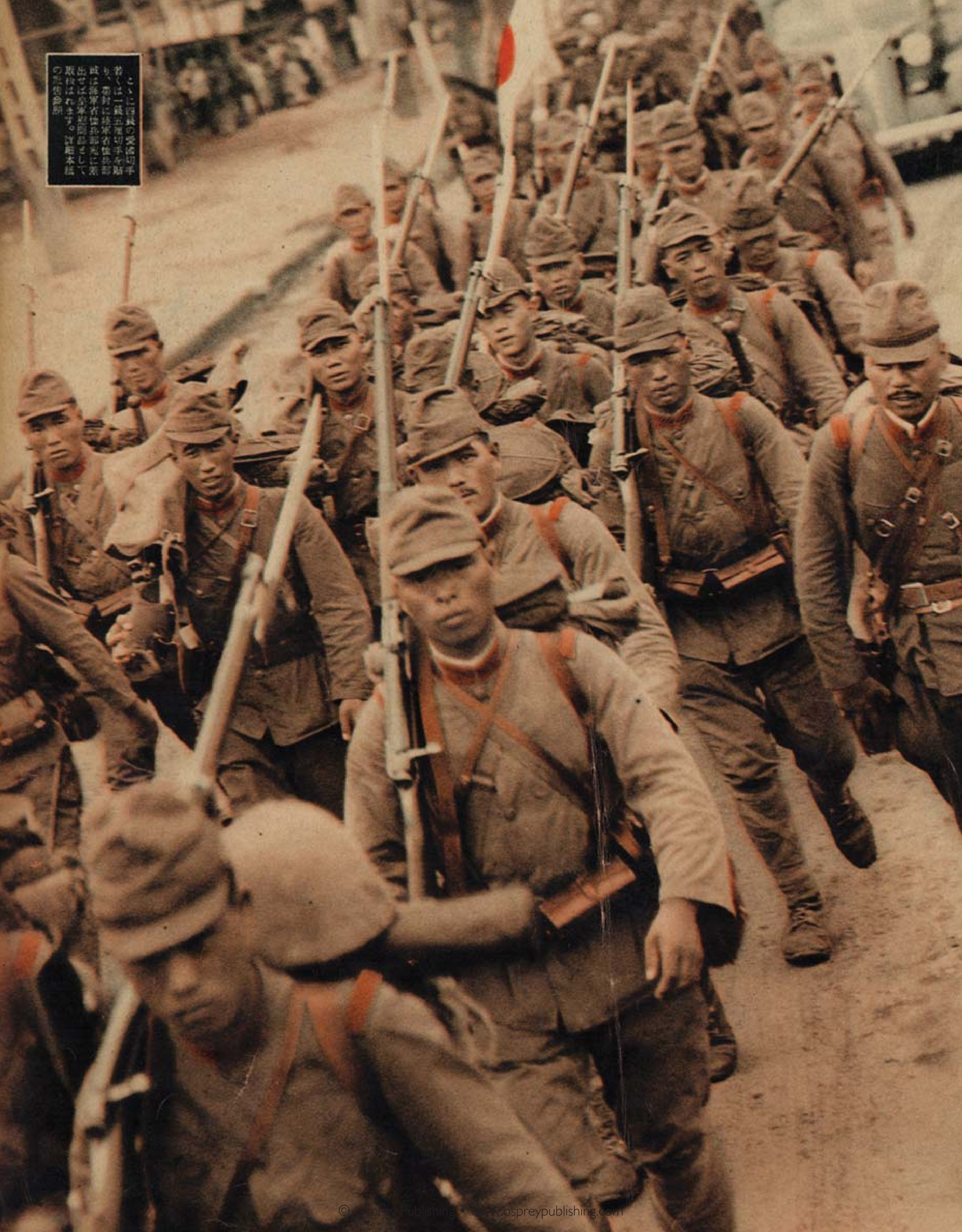
[10] Evans F. Carlson, *The Chinese Army* (1940).



こゝに四銭の愛国切手若くは一銭五厘切手を貼り、郵封に陸軍省恤兵部或は海軍省恤兵部宛に差出せば皇軍慰問品として取扱はれます。詳細本誌の三頁参照

Central China Area Army (CCAA) and the Northern China Area Army (NCAA). By 1939 the Japanese had made a huge commitment to the war in China with 1,000,000 men involved. These were divided into 11 divisions, four mixed brigades and one cavalry brigade in north China; ten divisions and one cavalry brigade in central China; and in southern China where comparatively little fighting was taking place in 1939 there were two divisions and one detachment. Air superiority, which Japan depended on so much, was provided by 270 aircraft of the Imperial Army and 250 from the Naval Air Arm.

In 1941, on the eve of Japan's expansion of their war into South-east Asia and the Pacific, the Japanese still had most of their army fighting in China. The China Expeditionary Army had 22 divisions and 20 independent brigades and 16 air squadrons. In December 1941, the Japanese forces in China including Manchuria were divided into two main armies, the China Expeditionary Army and the Kwangtung Army. In north China the North China Area Army had under its direct command the 27th, 35th and 110th infantry divisions and four mixed brigades. Also in northern China was the 1st Army with the 36th, 37th and 41st infantry divisions, as well as four mixed brigades, and the 12th Army with the 17th and 32nd infantry divisions, four mixed brigades and one cavalry brigade. In the far north of China covering Inner Mongolia was the Mongolia Garrison Army with one infantry division and one independent brigade. In the northern part of central China was the 11th Army with the 3rd, 6th, 13th, 34th, 39th and 40th infantry divisions as well as two mixed brigades. The southern part of central China was held by the 12th Army with the 15th, 22nd and 116th infantry divisions with five mixed brigades. Southern China was garrisoned by the 23rd Army with the 51st and 104th infantry divisions and one mixed brigade. Japanese air regiments in north, central and south China in 1941 totalled five fighter, one light bomber, one heavy bomber, one reconnaissance and one army co-operation.

In Manchuria the huge Kwangtung Army, which was soon to be depleted by the demands of the Pacific War, was organized into the following armies. The 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 20th with 13 infantry divisions, 19 infantry brigades and five locally raised militia brigades. In view of the threat from the Soviet Union, in 1941 the Kwangtung Army had seven tank regiments which would also be depleted during the next four years of the Pacific War. Also, because of the perceived threat of a Soviet invasion, the Kwangtung Army had a large air force of two air

Opposite page
Tough-looking Nationalist troops are seen during the winter of 1937–38, preparing for the second year of the conflict with Japan. All the soldiers have at least been issued with padded cotton uniforms and winter ski caps and the machine gunner is armed with a Czechoslovakian-made ZB-26.

divisions made up of four air brigades with five fighter regiments, four light bomber regiments, three heavy bomber regiments and two army co-operation regiments. The large numbers of troops and more importantly the large amounts of equipment and weaponry used in China and Manchuria could not be sustained by the Japanese. In 1937 the Imperial Army had envisaged a quick 'surgical' operation in north China which would only involve a slightly larger force than those used in 1931 and in 1933. By 1941 the Japanese were already overstretched in China with more and more troops sent to the war there. Their expansion of the war into South-east Asia and the Pacific in December 1941 was to stretch their resources to breaking point.

CAMPAIGNS OF 1938

After the heavy defeats of 1937 the Nationalist Army received no respite from the continuing Japanese advances throughout 1938. Besides the two major campaigns of the year at Hsuchow and Wuhan (see below) there was fighting on several fronts during 1938.

Throughout the year the Japanese launched a series of amphibious landings along China's eastern and southern coastline. Amoy, an island off the coastline of Fukien province, was defended by the Nationalist 75th Division and other coastal units but fell to an assault by Japanese naval landing forces on 13 May. Foochow, a major port and provincial capital of Fukien province, was defended by limited ground troops and also several ships of the Nationalist Navy against the superior ships of the Imperial Navy, but fell in May. The port of Swatow at the mouth of the Yangtze River in Kwangtung province was bombed by the Japanese in June and July including an alleged use of poison gas. When the port was attacked in July it was defended by mostly second-line and volunteer Nationalist forces and was easily captured. The fall of these ports left only Canton as a Nationalist-held port in the whole of China, which the Japanese then attacked in October. Canton was defended by the Nationalist 12th Army Group with 70,000 troops as well as four ships of the Nationalist Navy. The Japanese forces attacking the port came from the 21st Army with the 5th, 18th and 101st divisions as well as three armoured car battalions. The city fell on 21 October with little real resistance offered by the defenders leading to speculation that the Japanese had bribed some of the Chinese commanders.

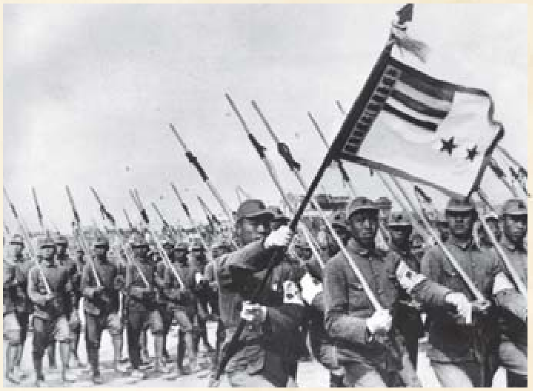
CHINESE PUPPET ARMIES

As the Japanese advanced through northern and central China in 1937–38 they looked at ways to govern the territory they now controlled. They set up a series of client or 'puppet' governments which at first were local committees consisting predominately of former officials from the warlord period. Two more substantial governments were then set up in north and central China, sponsored by rival Japanese armies.

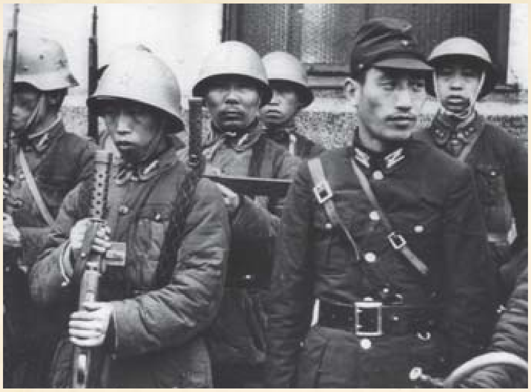
The so-called 'Provisional Government of China' was established in Peking by the Japanese Imperial Army in December 1937, and a 5,000-strong police force was raised to keep the peace. By 1939 a 13,300-strong army had also been recruited by the Provisional government with Japanese permission and was divided into eight infantry regiments of 1,650 men each. Few arms were available for the new army and most recruits had to make do with sharpened spears. The few rifles that were issued by the Japanese were given to bodyguard units whose job was to protect the puppet government officials from the constant threat of assassination. Even when rifles were given to puppet troops they were only issued with very limited supplies of ammunition in case they mutinied.

In March 1938, the rival 'Reformed Government of China' was established in the recently devastated former Nationalist capital of Nanking. This government was formed by the Japanese Central Army in competition with the Provisional government. A puppet army was soon raised by the Reformed Government and reached a strength of approximately 10,000 men. Given the behaviour of the Japanese troops in Nanking just a few months earlier, it is amazing that any Chinese volunteered to serve in this army. Those who did volunteer were probably motivated by sheer hunger, and the fear of retribution. Again the Reformed Government Army soldiers were poorly armed with old captured Nationalist rifles and sub-machine guns with rationed ammunition. For the benefit of the foreign press the Reformed Government Army troops were allowed to have a few machine guns although these were removed as soon as the press left the parade ground.

Unsurprisingly neither the Provisional nor the Reformed Government armies performed well, even when closely supervised by the Japanese. They soon became a source of intelligence and arms for the Chinese resistance and were disbanded in 1940 and replaced by the Nanking Army.



Puppet militiamen of the Provisional government in Peking parade in 1938. The Provisional government headed by 'quisling' Chinese politicians was set up by the Japanese in newly occupied Peking in December 1937. It lasted until 1940 when it was officially unified with Wang Ching-wei's puppet government in Nanking. All puppet soldiers were poorly armed and these men have only been issued with bamboo spears.



This motley group of Chinese soldiers belong to the hastily recruited army of the 'puppet' Reformed government in Nanking in 1938. After the outrages which took place in late 1937 and early 1938 in the former Nationalist capital it is surprising that any Chinese were willing to serve the Japanese. These men appear to have been dressed and armed in a haphazard fashion while one soldier does not even have a magazine for his MP-28 sub-machine gun.

Opposite page
This haunting image from 1938 shows a young man and woman taken prisoner by the Japanese as alleged guerrillas or 'bandits'. The smiling Japanese soldiers behind them display their soon-to-be-executed prisoners like trophies on a big game hunt. What makes the photograph even more disturbing is the fact that the two Chinese guerrillas are probably innocent civilians. The young woman has obviously had the rifle slung around her neck in an attempt to prove her guilt.

Battle of Hsuchow

The next major battle after Nanking would be at Hsuchow. This was the city where the Nationalists would try to halt the Japanese advance. Situated in the north of the Kiangsu province, a force of 200,000 troops was concentrated around the city in March under the command of the Kwangsi General Li T'sung-jen. Other troops were brought in from Honan province under the command of general T'ang En-po. Chiang Kai-shek freely admitted that he badly needed a victory against the Japanese and flew in to personally confer with Li. At the same time he installed a female spy into the general's headquarters to make sure of his loyalty: General Li and his Kwangsi troops had spent almost as much time in rebellion against Chiang as they had loyally serving him.

The battle started with a successful defensive operation by the Chinese in southern Shantung. The Japanese then advanced on Hsuchow in three columns with one column made up of the Imperial Army's 10th Division heading for the walled town of Taierhchwang north of Hsuchow. On 23 March a trap was set for the Japanese when Chinese forces retreated into Taierhchwang. The Japanese 10th Division – which wanted to use the town as a base for their operations against Hsuchow – had 60 field guns, ten heavy guns and 40 tanks. As they advanced into the town through the tightly packed houses and along narrow streets they were observed by Chinese commanders ready to spring the trap. Defending the town was the Nationalist 31st Division which fought the Japanese every inch of the way. While the intense street-fighting was going on, in the centre of Taierhchwang other Chinese forces were outflanking the town as the trap for the 10th Division was sprung. Japanese troops eventually controlled 75 per cent of the town but the 31st Division still held on, giving their comrades time to completely surround Taierhchwang. When the Japanese commanders realized that their troops were trapped inside the town they sent their 5th Division to try and relieve them. By the evening of 6 April the fighting was over and 8,000 or so Japanese troops were dead. The Chinese were ecstatic, and not surprisingly exaggerated their rare victory, claiming 20,000–30,000 Japanese dead. An estimated 10,000 Japanese broke out of the town and retreated northwards in an effort to reach their main army.

Although the victory at Taierhchwang was a great morale boost for the Chinese it did not alter the general situation around Hsuchow. The advance against Hsuchow continued and Japanese forces converged on the city from the north-east and from the south. During the rest of

April and the first half of May the Japanese gradually took towns to the south-west of the city with the intention of encircling the Chinese troops defending Hsuchow. On 13 May, it was decided to withdraw Nationalist units west from the city to avoid them being completely surrounded by the Japanese. Hsuchow fell on 19 May with total casualties for the campaign of about 100,000 men. Despite the Japanese efforts to envelop the Chinese forces, the remaining 500,000 Nationalist troops were able to disperse into Honan and Hupei provinces with many forming guerrilla groups.

Opposite page
Nationalist soldiers being transported by train to the front line at Lungshai on 21 May 1938. The Japanese Imperial Air Force's air superiority over most of China meant that travelling by rail was dangerous. Most of the men are unarmed, if lucky they would have received rifles when they got to the battle front.

Flooding of the Yellow River

The continued advance of the Japanese Imperial Army's 14th Division with 45,000 men through northern Honan province in May 1938 was seen as a major threat by Chiang Kai-shek. He knew that once the Japanese crossed the Yellow River they would be able to quickly advance southwards through Honan and Hupei provinces to threaten the strategic industrial tri-city region of Wuhan. As the Japanese advanced, the Chinese armies facing them broke and either dispersed into guerrilla groups or simply deserted. After the 14th Division crossed the Yellow River on 14 May they advanced on the city of Kaifeng. This important city's defences had been drastically reduced when Chiang ordered most of its garrison to withdraw from the front line. The remaining soldiers of the 32nd Army fought well but they were outnumbered by the Japanese attackers and the city fell on 6 June. As soon as Kaifeng fell, Chiang Kai-shek made the fateful decision to blow the dikes which were holding back the waters of the Yellow River. The ensuing floods unleashed millions of gallons of water, affecting an area of 54,000 square miles and destroying 4,000 villages. Countless thousands of Chinese people were killed and 2,000,000 were affected by the deluge. Most lost their homes and crops and were left facing starvation, with no assistance offered by the Nationalist government. The course of the Yellow River and the point at which it entered the Yellow Sea was permanently altered. Japanese casualties were not recorded but their advance southwards was delayed for three months. For Chiang and his military advisors his decision to order the flooding was a rational one based on their policy of a 'scorched earth' withdrawal in front of the Japanese advance. Chiang's callous actions clearly demonstrated to the Chinese people, the Japanese and the outside world that he was determined to continue to resist the Imperial Army, regardless of the cost.

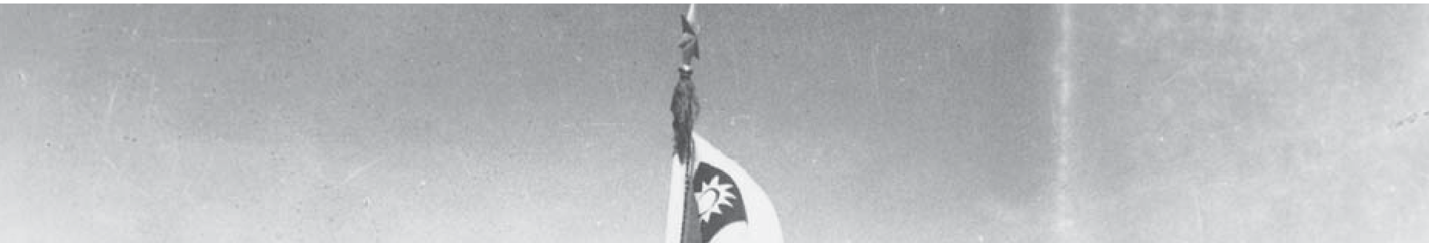
THE WUHAN CAMPAIGN

After the fall of Nanking in December 1937 the Nationalist capital had been hastily moved westwards to the city of Hankow. Hankow and its sister cities of Hanyang and Wuchang formed the tri-city industrialized region known as Wuhan. Wuhan became the centre of Chinese resistance after the fall of Nanking and the Japanese were determined to capture it. Wuhan was defended by a huge 107-division force, which on paper amounted to approximately 800,000 men. The Nationalist formations were divided into the 9th War Area, made up of the expanded Wuhan garrison, and the 5th War Area. Most troops of the 5th War Area came from Kwangsi province and were under the command of General Pai Ch'ung-hsi. To take Wuhan the Japanese had gathered a 17-division force which, including various support units, amounted to 380,000 men. The Nationalist plan was to simply withdraw in front of the Japanese advance, engaging the enemy when possible. This step-by-step withdrawal would only delay the inevitable fall of Wuhan by a few months. Indeed, the directives issued to the Chinese commanders never specified that they should stand and fight, only withdraw after a suitable period of resistance.

The Japanese offensive advanced along the Yangtze River Valley in two large columns. It was supported by a flotilla of gunboats and destroyers on the Yangtze River, which used their guns to bombard enemy positions. When the Japanese reached the river port of Matang on 24 June they took the heavily fortified city in only three days. Matang had been expected to hold out for much longer but the ships of the Imperial Navy destroyed most of its defences. The defenders did fight well but were overwhelmed by the superior firepower of the Japanese. During July the advance continued with Hukou falling on 8 July.

The next city along the Yangtze, Kiukiang, was defended by 45,000 Nationalist troops but was outflanked by the Japanese and fell after the garrison abandoned the defences. When the Japanese entered the city on 26 July they killed and raped the civilian population. Reports of atrocities committed at Kiukiang reached Wuhan, causing the defenders to fear that they would suffer similar atrocities if their city fell. For the next few weeks there was a lull in the fighting as many Japanese troops were struck down with dysentery. The Nationalist commanders were unable to take advantage of the Japanese sickness as their own troops were suffering from malaria and they had run out of quinine. When the Japanese offensive resumed they were now hit by heavy attacks by the troops of General Hsueh Yueh, who had left Kiukiang with his men then regrouped to attack the Japanese effectively.

Over the next few months the Japanese advance continued and the city of Kuangchi and the fortress of Tienchiachen fell. When Tienchiachen fell the entire surviving garrison was executed by the Japanese, presumably for putting up too much of a fight. The fall of the fortress triggered a retreat by the Nationalist 11th Group Army towards Wuhan in good order. Other Japanese formations now converged on Wuhan with the 2nd Army capturing the city of Shangcheng on 16 September before advancing through the Tapieh Mountains. Another column captured Hsinyang on the Peking–Hankow Railway on 12 October. Throughout October the Japanese 11th Army continued its advance westwards, defeating any Nationalist formations which it met. The Chinese policy of 'defence in depth' meant that individual units could be outflanked by the advancing Japanese and then destroyed from the rear. After taking several other cities the Japanese were now converging on Wuhan, and the Imperial Army's



Nationalist armoured crewmen pose with their Soviet-supplied armoured cars in Sinkiang province in the late 1930s. These valuable BA-6 and BA-27 armoured cars were kept well away from the fighting in the 1930s and early 1940s. Chiang Kai-shek may well have been saving them for the expected 'show-down' with the Communists after the Japanese had been defeated.

3rd, 6th, 10th, 13th, 16th and 106th divisions raced to try to be the first to enter the city. As the Japanese advanced, the Nationalist 11th Group Army collapsed and the Imperial Army entered Wuhan on 25 October. The only saving grace was that when the Japanese entered Wuhan there was not a repeat of previous outrages.

The Nationalist government had already left Hankow in early September and had set up a new capital Chungking in faraway Szechwan province. Recriminations by the defeated Nationalist commanders highlighted Chiang Kai-shek's abandonment of his troops. In particular he was accused of sacrificing the Kwangsi troops of long-time rival General Pai Ch'ung-hsi.

The Wuhan Campaign had taken five months and had cost the lives of almost one million Chinese soldiers. Japanese casualties were claimed by the Chinese to have reached 200,000 with many succumbing to malaria, dysentery and cholera during the long advance. The Japanese press at the time tended to portray the war in China as a sort of 'boys' own' adventure and their reports unintentionally featured some comic aspects. One concerned the Wuhan Campaign, where it was claimed that the Chinese had trained a special defence force of primates. Several newspapers claimed that a 5,000-strong unit of orangutans had been armed with grenades to throw at the enemy, and also that they had been trained to identify and target commanders. The reality of continual illness and arduous conditions bore little relation to the strange imaginings of Japanese journalists.

THE NATIONALIST ARMY 1938–41

The heavy losses suffered by the Nationalist Army during the battles of late 1937 and 1938 could not easily be replaced. After the first few months of fighting in the second Sino-Japanese War it had been decided to send reinforcements from the southern provinces to the northern battle front. Unfortunately the southern units were sent north with whatever uniforms and equipment they had worn in the warmer southern climate, and they would receive little or no new weaponry or equipment when they reached the front due to shortages. Large numbers of Szechwanese troops – already regarded as some of the worst in Nationalist China – began arriving in the north during 1937. When they arrived at the front they were reported to be suffering from a lack of proper ammunition, medical facilities, maps and more importantly food. Some of these troops would then be seen

A regular army officer of the Nationalist Army uses a map to instruct villagers for their role in defending their village against Japanese attack. With only the odd rifle and their farm implements to defend themselves the fate of these men would be grim if they chose to fight. The Japanese would kill every man, woman and child of a village that resisted them, then burn the crops and buildings.

fighting in the bitterly cold province of Shansi in the winter of 1937–38 still wearing their old straw sandals, over bare feet!

Some commentators said that by the end of 1938 the Nationalist Army had ceased to exist as a fighting force. Of those divisions which had not been totally destroyed in the 1937–38 fighting, most had lost a third of their manpower. With the Japanese blocking all arms supply routes, China had developed a severe shortage of weaponry. Even though hundreds of thousands of rifles had been imported in the 1930s, many of these were now in Japanese hands. Sometimes two or even three Nationalist soldiers had to share a rifle, and hand it on to their comrades on guard duty. Often new recruits to a unit would remain unarmed until another soldier was wounded or killed in action, at which point they could claim his rifle. The high rate of inflation after 1937 also meant that even if sources of armaments could be found there was little money with which to buy them. Nazi Germany built a closer relationship with the Japanese after 1937, and in April 1938 the Germans cancelled all arms sales to China including those already ordered by the Nationalist Army.

A 81mm mortar crew lay down covering fire during a Nationalist counter-attack in the fighting of 1938. The heavily camouflaged crewmen are all wearing the German-supplied M35 steel helmet. China was supplied with mortars by France, Germany and several other nations during the 1930s. They also produced copies of some mortars in many of their local arsenals, as they had done since the mid-1920s.

Luckily for the Chinese, the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin had his own reasons for keeping the Nationalist Army supplied with armaments. He wanted to ensure that the Japanese were tied down in China so that they could not use their Kwangtung Army in Manchukuo against the Soviet Union. So from 1938 until 1941 the Soviet Union sent substantial amounts of small arms, artillery and tanks to China as well as a large number of fighters and bombers. These arms shipments included 50,000 rifles, 10,000 machine guns, 1,140 artillery of all types and 82 T-26 light tanks. Although the amounts of small arms was not large compared to China's needs, the artillery and tanks were vital to the Nationalist survival.

Equally important were the 900 aircraft sent by the Soviet Union, along with instructors and pilots to fly them. By February 1939 there were a reported 712 Soviet pilots, mechanics and other support personnel serving in China on a 'voluntary' basis. The aircraft that came with them included I-15 and I-16 fighters, SB-2 medium bombers and DB-3 and TB-3 heavy bombers. All of these aircraft were in front-line service with the Soviet Air Force at the time. The Soviet arms and those produced in China's own arsenals were sufficient to ensure the survival of the Nationalist Army.

Equally problematic as the shortage of weaponry was the fact that from 1937 onwards Chiang had to rely on lower-quality soldiers. In 1938 the Nationalist government introduced conscription to try to replace the huge losses. At the same time a new training programme for officers and men was started and a guerrilla training school was opened with Communist advisors on its staff. In order to try and instil the will to resist in his troops, Chiang called for political training in the Chinese Army to be intensified. He also demanded that all able-bodied citizens in Free China be given some form of military training. Unfortunately the new troops coming into the army during 1938 were not up to the standards he had tried to establish in the Nationalist Army previously. This meant that the Nationalists found it increasingly difficult to fight a conventional war against the Japanese, Chiang knew that he would have to change the way his army fought and rely more on attrition and guerrilla tactics to try and wear down the Japanese. The Japanese commander in the south of China reportedly commented that, 'China's strategy invites only contempt and is not in keeping with a soldier's honour'. Nonetheless, this change in tactics would pose difficulties for the Japanese who would no longer be able to outmanoeuvre the Chinese forces in pitched battles.

If a shortage of well-trained soldiers was a problem, then the quality of the officers was a crisis for the Nationalists. Having lost most of his Whampoa-trained officers, Chiang was forced to rely on officers whose loyalty was at times questionable. Most had roots in various warlord armies, or came from provincial armies outside his sphere of influence. The doubtful loyalty of high-ranking Nationalist officers was obvious and was shown by one telling statistic: 39 per cent of the top 37 Nationalist generals in 1938 had rebelled against the Chiang Kai-shek at some point prior to 1937. These former rebellious generals had lost much of their power when Chiang had a powerful army behind him, but now they could regain control over their provinces. In effect, Chiang Kai-shek was only the head of a loose coalition, rather than the commander-in-chief of a united fighting force. Chiang was perfectly well aware of the shortcomings of many of his middle- and high-ranking officers. His frustration at their poor performance and incompetence led him to issue detailed orders to units which were fighting on distant fronts. Because in most cases he had insufficient or non-existent intelligence on his armies' dispositions or strengths, these orders were often counter-productive, countermanding those already issued by officers at the front, which then had to be altered to suit his instructions. Most officers in the field felt unable to challenge orders issued by the Nationalist Army high command. They usually carried them out regardless of the consequences to their men as they feared punishment by Chiang. This constant interference by Chiang in day-to-day affairs on front lines which were often thousands of miles away led to chaos on a number of occasions. Generals often committed their troops to battle piecemeal without consulting even their neighbouring commander. The more capable the commander, the more he resented the interference and many found the situation unbearable. On one occasion General Hsueh Yueh, the Kiangsi commander, led his troops to a remote part of the province just so that Chiang could not contact him by telephone! However, Chiang simply could not trust his officers' judgement and tried to justify his efforts to control them. He said:

> I have to lie awake at night, thinking what fool things they may do. Then I write and tell them not to do these things. But they are so dumb, they will do a lot of foolishness unless you anticipate them. This is the secret of handling them – you must imagine everything that they can do that would be wrong, and warn them against it. That is why I have to write so many letters.[11]

Because of the many weaknesses of the Chinese Nationalist Army it was surprising that it was still in the field after so many defeats. Even in 1941 when some soldiers had been at war for four years often without any leave or any realistic hope of ever returning to their homes, they kept fighting. Some had discovered a new patriotism in their fight against the Japanese and many had ample reason from their own experience to hate the enemy. A US correspondent was taken aback when he questioned a Nationalist soldier in the field in 1941, 'Whose soldier are you?' The reporter was expecting the soldier to give the usual reply that he belonged to the army of his commander as would have been the case since the warlord period.

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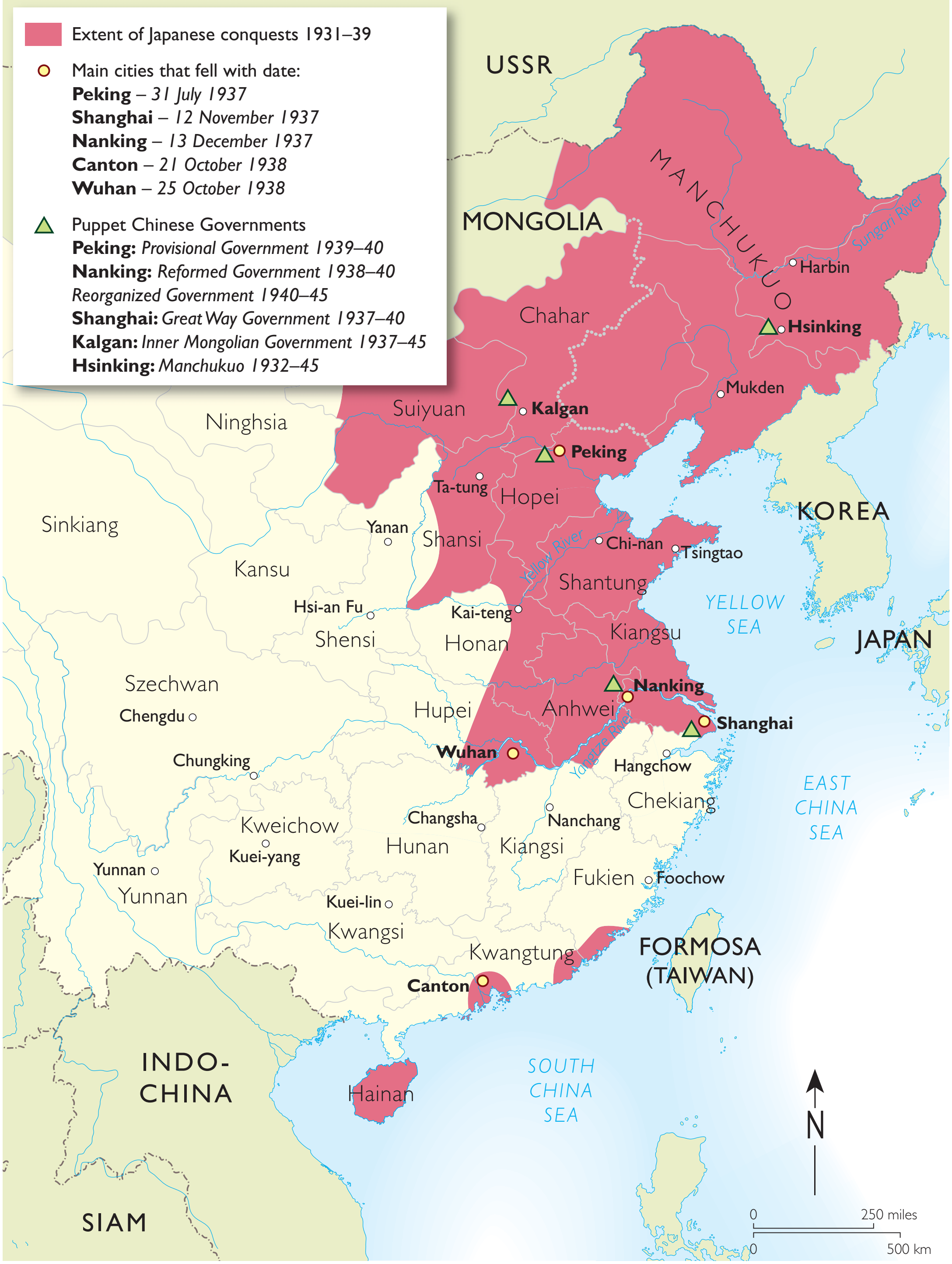
[11] Theodore White, *In Search of History* (1978).

EXTENT OF JAPANESE CONQUESTS IN CHINA BY 1939


🟥 Extent of Japanese conquests 1931–39
○ Main cities that fell with date:
Peking – *31 July 1937*
Shanghai – *12 November 1937*
Nanking – *13 December 1937*
Canton – *21 October 1938*
Wuhan – *25 October 1938*
△ Puppet Chinese Governments
Peking: *Provisional Government 1939–40*
Nanking: *Reformed Government 1938–40*
Reorganized Government 1940–45
Shanghai: *Great Way Government 1937–40*
Kalgan: *Inner Mongolian Government 1937–45*
Hsinking: *Manchukuo 1932–45*
USSR
MONGOLIA
MANCHUKUO
Sungari River
Harbin
Hsinking
Mukden
Chahar
Suiyuan
Kalgan
Peking
Ninghsia
Ta-tung
Hopei
Sinkiang
Yanan
Shansi
Yellow River
Chi-nan
Tsingtao
KOREA
Kansu
Shantung
YELLOW SEA
Hsi-an Fu
Kai-teng
Shensi
Honan
Kiangsu
JAPAN
Szechwan
Chengdu
Nanking
Hupei
Anhwei
Shanghai
Yangtze River
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Hainan
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Opposite page
This resolute-looking fighter of the Nationalist Women's Volunteer Corps in Chungking in 1941 is wearing the unit's insignia and a straw sun hat with added canvas camouflage. Her rifle is a Mauser-type 'Chiang Kai-shek' which was produced in Chinese arsenals in large numbers.

When the man said 'I am China's soldier' he was pleased that at least this Nationalist soldier was patriotic. Unfortunately for China this soldier would still have been in the minority as most still owed loyalty to their commanding officer and it was the loyalty of these commanders to the government that would continue to be a major problem for Chiang Kai-shek throughout 1938 to 1941.

CAMPAIGNS OF 1939

The 1939 fighting began with the large island of Hainan off the southern coast of China being taken by a Japanese amphibious force. During their occupation of the island the Japanese would be plagued by the strong Communist guerrilla force established there.

In March 1939, the Japanese launched an offensive against the Kiangsi provincial capital of Nanchang which was garrisoned by 200,000 troops. The Japanese used five divisions totalling 120,000 men in the attack and took the city on 24 March. A Nationalist counter-attack in April failed, with the Nationalists suffering 50,000 dead.

In April the Japanese launched an attack against Nationalist forces in Northern Hupei province, which they perceived to be threatening their hold on the city of Hankow. The attack was carried out by the 13th and 16th divisions and a cavalry brigade, and they clashed with troops of the Kwangsi general, Li Tsung-jen. Li moved his troops behind the Japanese rear and forced them to withdraw, although his army suffered 9,000 casualties.

In September the capital of Hunan province, Changsha, was attacked by a 100,000-strong Japanese force made up of four divisions and parts of two further divisions. In one of the few Nationalist successes of 1939, the Chinese forces defending the city pushed the Japanese back in a series of battles between 29 September and 3 October. After the Japanese supply lines were threatened by Chinese troops, the Japanese withdrew and the Nationalists secured the city on 6 October.

The last fighting of the year began in December when the Japanese launched an offensive into Kwangsi province in order to stop supplies getting into China from French Indo-China. Defending Kwangsi were 60,000 of some of the best Chinese troops available, armed with some new Soviet T-26s and armoured cars. In a month of fighting which ended in stalemate, both sides suffered heavy casualties with the Japanese losing 8,000 and the Kwangsi forces 14,000.

THE NATIONALIST WINTER OFFENSIVE 1939–40

By 1939 Chiang Kai-shek was desperate to try and take the initiative against the Japanese after the disastrous series of defeats suffered by the Nationalist Army since 1937. However, the Nationalist Army was not really in a position to launch any offensive in late 1939 and the scale of Chiang's planned attack was totally outside its capabilities. Chiang intended to use 80 divisions – 550,000 men – which amounted to 50 per cent of his available troops. He had high ambitions for the offensive which even included the possibility of re-capturing the capital Nanking. This large-scale offensive was to take place across nine provinces in north, central and south China. Chiang was aware that, due to troop rotations, a lot of the Japanese troops in China in late 1939 were newly arrived replacements for veterans returning home which did present an opportunity. Unfortunately, although the Chinese forces had been re-built to some degree after the heavy losses of 1937–38, with most supply lines to China cut there was no way to replace the lost weaponry and equipment.

The desperate situation that the Nationalist Army faced in 1939 is exemplified by this munitions worker's task – he is carrying an archaic 19th-century wall gun out of its store to be checked over for use by guerrillas fighting the Japanese in southern China. Although totally impractical, this museum piece was still an improvement on the spears that many guerrillas were armed with by this time.

For these reasons the Nationalist troops that were to be involved in the offensive were woefully equipped and armed. Most of their heavy equipment had been lost in 1937–39 so the offensive was literally 'men against machines'. There was, however, no lack of bravery shown by many ordinary Chinese soldiers and this on occasion could almost make up for their material inferiority. Regardless of their many weaknesses, when the offensive was launched on 14 November the Nationalists did make some progress. They managed to launch over 2,000 separate attacks on the Japanese between mid-December 1939 and the end of January 1940. Fighting on most sectors was extremely fierce with the Japanese resorting to gas against the Nationalist 22nd Group Army. One commentator remarked that the 22nd did not even have any steel helmets, never mind the luxury of a gas mask.

Ever since the Japanese atrocities at Nanking and other cities, the attitude of the Chinese soldier had hardened. One soldier told of his unit's successful attack on a Japanese supply convoy, when he and his comrades killed all the enemy soldiers. In revenge for the Japanese outrages, they then also killed a number of Japanese comfort women who were travelling with the convoy. Some Nationalist units, however, only launched half-hearted attacks against the Japanese and then halted, sending various excuses to headquarters in Nanking. In many cases this reluctance to attack the enemy was down to the simple fact that they were up against Japanese troops who had both superior weaponry and training. Nationalist units were totally outgunned, especially when it came to heavy weaponry – in one small sector of fighting the Japanese had 38 field guns, while the Nationalist troops facing them had two field guns which had recently been sent from Chungking. Not only that, but replacement shells for the two guns had to be transported by mule from the Nationalist headquarters, which was ten to 14 days away.

When the Nationalists did manage to take territory from the Japanese they could not hold on to it. Not only were they faced with the superior artillery of the Imperial Army but they also had to put up with air bombardment by the Japanese Air Force. Any Chinese soldiers wounded in the offensive shared the same appalling fate that the Chinese wounded had suffered since 1937. In one recorded instance during the first three weeks of the offensive, 2,600 wounded were taken to a rear hospital for treatment. Unfortunately it took two weeks to reach the hospital, and only 1,000 of the wounded were alive by the time they got there.

By early 1940 the main offensives had ended in either a stalemate or loss of territory by the Nationalist Army. Chiang commented in February 1940 that the Winter Offensive had severely affected his soldiers' morale. The Japanese agreed with Chiang – in an intelligence report from 1941 they said that the Chinese soldiers' fighting efficiency had declined by 30 per cent since 1940. Chiang also knew that one of the reasons for the failure was because regional troops from the provinces had not been fully committed. Without his reliable divisions, which had been lost at Shanghai and other 1937–38 battles, Chiang had little choice but to accept the situation. After the collapse of the Winter Offensive he realized that his army was not capable of launching a major offensive again, or at least not for the foreseeable future. He reassured his staff falsely however,

Next page
Nationalist troops in training in 1939 practice anti-aircraft drill in a position they have camouflaged with grass. Shortage of weapons and other equipment meant that the Nationalist Army of 1939 was in a parlous state when it launched its Winter Offensive at the end of the year.

Communist guerrilla fighters of the New 4th Army put on a display of firepower that may not be as potent as it first appears. These US Thompson M1921 sub-machine guns are probably copies made in the Taiyuan arsenal in Shansi province. By 1941, when this photograph was taken, there was a desperate shortage of ammunition for these weapons. Because of this shortage most of these sub-machine guns were soon handed on to second-line Communist militia.

that the Nationalists' defensive policy was a short-term situation and that they would go over to the offensive soon.

1940 CAMPAIGNS

The Japanese consolidated their position in the southern provinces of China in late 1939 and early 1940 by landing the 5th Division and a brigade on the Kwangtung coast in mid-November. This force took several Kwangtung towns and cities before continuing their advance into Kwangsi province. They took the Kwangsi provincial capital Nanning on 24 November and then moved to the north and north-east of the city. As they advanced further into Kwangsi province they encountered heavy Chinese resistance from the 154,000 Nationalist troops in the region, and cities and towns changed hands several times. The Japanese then sent two further divisions to the region, bringing the total of their troops involved in the campaign to 100,000 men with 100 aircraft in support. This reinforcement allowed them to take the cities of Pinyang and Shanglin in February. However, Chinese pressure was building on the isolated Japanese forces and by the end of the month they had pulled most of their troops out of southern Kwangsi province. Small garrisons were left to hold the cities of Nanning and Lungchow and the front became stable again.

In May the Japanese launched an offensive to push Chinese forces in Hupei province further away from the strategic cities of Wuchang and Hankow. The attacking force comprised two brigades and six divisions, one of which had been transferred from the

Kwangtung Army in Manchuria for the operation. In June the Japanese advanced westwards and captured several towns and cities in Hupei, including Nanchang which fell on 3 June. The Japanese advanced in two columns with each column designated certain target towns to capture before joining together to attack the Yangtze River port of I-Chang. I-Chang was important to the Nationalists as a large quantity of rice for the population of Chungking was transported through it. In keeping with the policy of trying to starve Chungking into submission, the Japanese advanced on the port and captured it on 12 June. A Chinese counter-attack on the 17th recaptured the town for a short time, but the Japanese threw the Nationalists back almost immediately. This operation was typical of those launched by the Japanese in central China after 1940 in that the intention was not really to capture territory. The aim of this and future Japanese offensives was to disrupt the Nationalists' ability to continue the war. During the campaign, Chinese forces comprised six army groups and a strong guerrilla force of over five divisions.

Opposite page
Nationalist troops move into the ruins of the town of Changsha which changed hands four times in 40 days of fighting in late 1941 and early 1942. There had been three battles for the strategic town in Hunan province and on two occasions the Japanese had been outflanked and defeated by Nationalist troops. This machine-gunner is armed with the Czech-designed ZB-26 light machine gun, the most common model in service with the Chinese in the Second World War.

THE HUNDRED REGIMENTS CAMPAIGN

In order to be able to claim to be the true anti-Japanese military force in China, Mao Tse-tung decided to launch his own major offensive against the invaders. This offensive was to involve the same ratio of available Communist troops as had the Nationalists' Winter Offensive of 1939–40. The 'Hundred Regiments Campaign', which lasted from 20 August to 5 December 1940, involved 115 regiments of the Communist 8th Route Army. The Communists launched a 400,000-strong force of regulars and irregulars against the Japanese lines of communication in northern China. Attacks were particularly aimed against the railways and the forts and blockhouses defending them. They also targeted commercial targets and succeeded in closing down several Japanese-run coal mines. For three months the Communists kept up relentless pressure on the Japanese, who gave ground while they regrouped. In October the Communists defeated a mixed Japanese and puppet Chinese force in northern Kiangsu. They claimed to have killed or wounded 20,000 Japanese and 18,000 of their puppet Allies. When the Japanese had time to recover from the shock of the offensive they reacted in their usual efficient and savage manner, pushing the Communists back and inflicting heavy casualties.

The Japanese also reacted to their losses by launching the savage 'Three Alls' policy. This policy said simply 'kill all, burn all, destroy all' – any village suspected of aiding the Communists was devastated. Men, women and children were slaughtered and all livestock and crops were destroyed. No one was spared as the Japanese hammered home their message that resistance to their rule would not be tolerated.

Although the Hundred Regiments campaign had not brought any lasting gains for the Communists it had convinced the Chinese and some in the West that they wanted to fight the Japanese whatever the cost. The

JAPANESE WAR-WEARINESS

Despite the fact that the Japanese Imperial Army had won victory after victory in its campaigns in China up to 1941, many of its soldiers were growing tired of the war. During the initial period of the war in China enthusiastic and patriotic Japanese soldiers were willing to make any sacrifice for their country. They were willing to go into action again and again without any hesitation and hand-to-hand fighting was relished by many soldiers. By 1939 it was noticeable to observers that a certain level of war weariness had set in and the men were less willing to take unnecessary risks. As the Japanese Army expanded in the last years of the 1930s its intake of new recruits were not up to the same standard of those of the pre-1937 army. In 1936, the Japanese had recruited 170,000 men but this figure jumped to 340,000 in 1937. On the eve of the Sino-Japanese War the Japanese had 24 divisions, by 1941 this had grown to 51 divisions. With the expansion of Japan's war into the Pacific and South-east Asia in 1941–42, the pressure on the army in China grew.

The quality of officers and men sent to China as replacements plummeted and the junior officers arriving were often described as 'useless' by their commanders. These new soldiers and officers went to China not with the enthusiasm of their predecessors but with the stark realization that few of them would return to Japan. Because of the deterioration of the Japanese Army's morale and its performance, its commanders had to change their tactics. They began to rely more and more on their superior firepower and equipment in actions against the Chinese Nationalist and Communist troops. When guerrillas were reported in the vicinity of a Japanese unit previously they would have marched out against them, but by 1939 they were more likely to stay in their garrisons and fire heavy artillery in the general direction of the enemy. In the meantime, the more experienced Chinese soldier had learnt how to fight the Japanese and when outgunned would withdraw to fight another day. Some observers even said that the Chinese soldier was now proving a match for their Japanese enemy. As far as the Chinese Army was concerned, the myth of invincibility of the Imperial soldier had been exploded. Fortunately for the Japanese Imperial Army, even after over four years of war the Chinese soldier was not usually able to exploit his enemy's weaknesses. Japanese troops would continue to fight in China for several more years and although some aspects of the war had changed since 1937, the fighting was far from over.

other major effect of the campaign was to aggravate the Nationalists, and would lead to the final breakdown of the United Front against the Japanese. The offensive was expensive in human terms with estimates of losses for the 8th Army reaching 22,000, while only inflicting losses of 3,000–4,000 on the Japanese. Communist propaganda claimed to have inflicted 20,645 casualties on the Japanese and 5,155 on their puppet troops. In total the Communists estimated that they had fought 1,824 battles during the campaign. The campaign was, however, a reality check for the Communists who realized that they could not attempt to take on the Japanese Imperial Army in conventional warfare. They would instead have to concentrate on low-level guerrilla attacks which would eventually wear down the Japanese will to continue their occupation of China. During the campaign, the Communists used large numbers of cavalry and a veteran of one of the mounted columns described his unit's march thus:

> The weather was dry, and every mounted unit, indeed every single horseman, kicked up great clouds of dust as they moved. Behind us and around us there were mules, horsemen, ankle deep yellow dust and camels. The mountains looked as if they had been cut out by a giant with a great knife. The desolate peaks were lashed by the wind and the slopes were covered in stones and dense undergrowth, a favourite haunt of snakes. Gusty winds blew in from the Gobi desert and the sun shone dimly. When the wind dropped the heat became oppressive. We wore gas masks against the dust. All credit should go to our horses, which carried us carefully over the dangerous slopes. In places the track was so dangerous that we had to lead the horses by their reins.[12]

THE NEW 4TH ARMY INCIDENT

Under the terms of the United Front agreement of 1937, the Nationalist government had agreed to pay and support both the Communist 8th Route Army and the New 4th Army. The agreement which came into force in spring 1938 was that the 8th Route Army should be supplied up to maximum strength of 45,000 and the New 4th to 15,000 troops. Pay and supplies for both armies was always slow to arrive and despite assurances the two armies were given little support by the Nationalists. Clashes between the two armies and Nationalist formations had occurred during the period of the United Front. It was decided that both the 8th Route and the New 4th should move to new zones of operations where such clashes were less likely. In the spring of 1940 the Nationalist headquarters decided that the 8th Route Army should move its forces to the north of the Yellow River and the New 4th to the north of the Yangtze River. The main force of the Communist New 4th Army had, as ordered, moved to the north of the Yangtze by December 1940. Left behind were the army's Headquarters Detachment which was made up the staff officers, the high command and an escort unit totalling about 5,000 men. Their route to join the rest of the New 4th was detailed by the Nationalist command and – according to the Communists – ran too close to Japanese positions. When Chou En-lai, the Communist representative in Chungking, asked for another route to be chosen, Chiang Kai-shek acceded to his request. Chou then received a radio message to say that the Headquarters Detachment had been surrounded on the march by up to

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[12] Janusz Pielalkiewicz, *The Cavalry of World War II* (1976).

Previous page
A Japanese armoured unit with infantry support on, according to the original caption, a 'mopping up campaign' somewhere in central China in February 1941. The Type 94 tankettes were totally obsolete by European standards but were adequate for the role they had to play in China. In support of the tanks is a machine-gun team – armed with a captured Chinese ZB-36 – all well dressed for the winter conditions.

40,000 Nationalist troops from seven divisions. They were attacked by their supposed Allies, and over a series of running battles between 4 and 7 January the whole of the army's staff had been killed.

During the fighting, between 2,000 and 4,000 soldiers had been killed but as some were captured and sent to prison camps the exact figure was hard to substantiate. Women amongst the staff were raped and those taken to prison camps were shot along the way for the slightest excuse. Whether the incident was planned in detail or was simply a clash between enemies forced to fight together against a common enemy the result was the same.

Chiang issued an order disbanding the New 4th, and recriminations were thrown by both parties as to who was to blame for the clash. Although no declaration of war was issued by either side, from the moment the incident began the Communists and Nationalists were effectively at war with each other. The 'United Front' was no longer in force and the two sides would continue their civil war as well as fighting their own independent wars against the Japanese.

CAMPAIGNS IN 1941

Elsewhere the struggle between the Japanese and Nationalist armies continued. In March 1941, the Japanese launched a force on a punitive operation in Kiangsi province. Units of the 33rd and 34th divisions were faced by Nationalist units of the incompetent General Lo Cho-ying commanding the 19th Group Army. Lo was a favourite of Chiang Kai-shek, who had failed to command his men well on several occasions. In this instance though, his men held firm, throwing back the Japanese in three days of hand-to-hand fighting at Shangkao (22–25 March).

May saw an operation by the North China Area Army against concentrations of guerrillas in Northern Honan province. This operation by six Japanese divisions was successful and allowed the Japanese to prepare for a crossing of the Yellow River which happened in October. Between May and September there was a lull in the fighting in China as Japan's attention switched to its preparations for the invasion of South-east Asia and the Pacific.

In September 1941 the Japanese Imperial Army gathered together a large force of 125,000 men to make another attack on the city of Changsha in Hunan province. This Japanese 11th Army, which was made up of four infantry divisions and four independent brigades in four columns, advanced southwards through Hunan, brushing aside every concentration of the 300,000 Nationalist troops in the area along the way. Waiting in Changsha was General Hsueh Yueh, the victor of the 1939 battle, and his battle-hardened troops. By 27 September, the Japanese had reached the gates of the city and a vicious three-day street battle ensued. The defenders launched a total of 11 sorties from the city against the besieging Japanese with heavy casualties on each side. Defensive positions changed hands again and again as the Chinese matched the Japanese in the bitter fighting. A US journalist noted the surprising confidence of Nationalist defenders and said that young soldiers were walking around 'with an unexpected swagger their bayonets gleaming… Farmers' lads mostly, with faces like ripe apples.'[13] Nationalist reserves then came in behind the Japanese from the north and the north-east and the Japanese were in danger of becoming trapped in the city. They withdrew to the north leaving an estimated 10,000 dead behind them but not before they had burnt down the main hospital in the city and killed its patients. Although the defeat of the Japanese at Changsha was welcome, as with all Chinese victories it made little overall difference to the war. In October, the Japanese crossed the Yellow River and took the city of Chengchow in Honan province, which they had first attempted to do in 1938.

CHINA'S GOVERNMENT AT WAR 1938–41

Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government withdrew from Wuhan to far-off Chungking in Szechwan province in 1938.The chosen site for the new Chinese capital had only one advantage and that was its remoteness from the rest of the country. Szechwan province had been largely ignored by the Nationalist government during the 1930s. Its military commanders – who were still warlords in all but name – had often been at war with each other during the 1920s and 1930s. The inhabitants of the province saw themselves as distinct from other Chinese and had their own customs. Throughout the war the Szechwanese regarded the Chinese in their midst as troublesome 'guests'. They saw the Nationalist government as a foreign organization taking temporary shelter in their province.

Once the Nationalists moved into Chungking they began to try and organize something approaching a normal government. Most large

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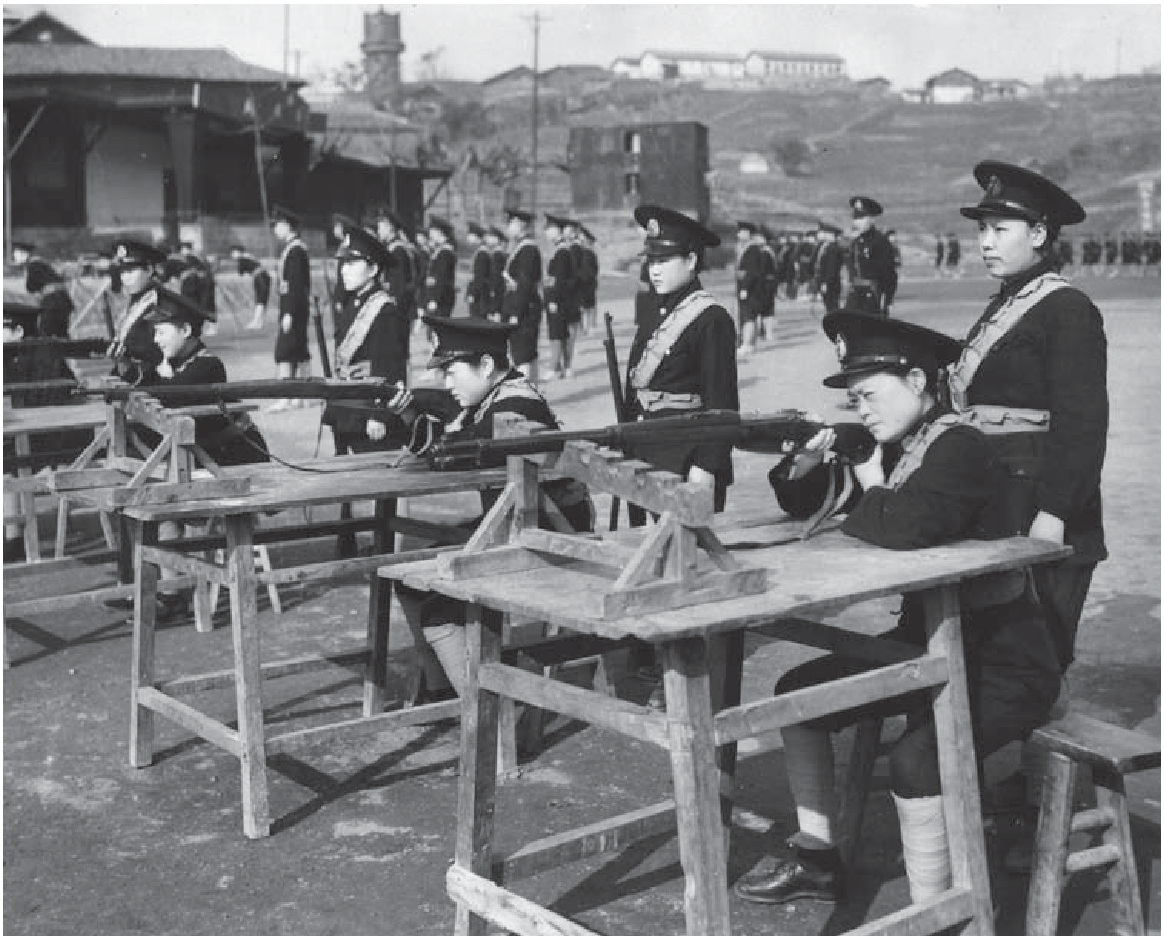
[13] Robert Payne, *Chinese Diaries* (1945).

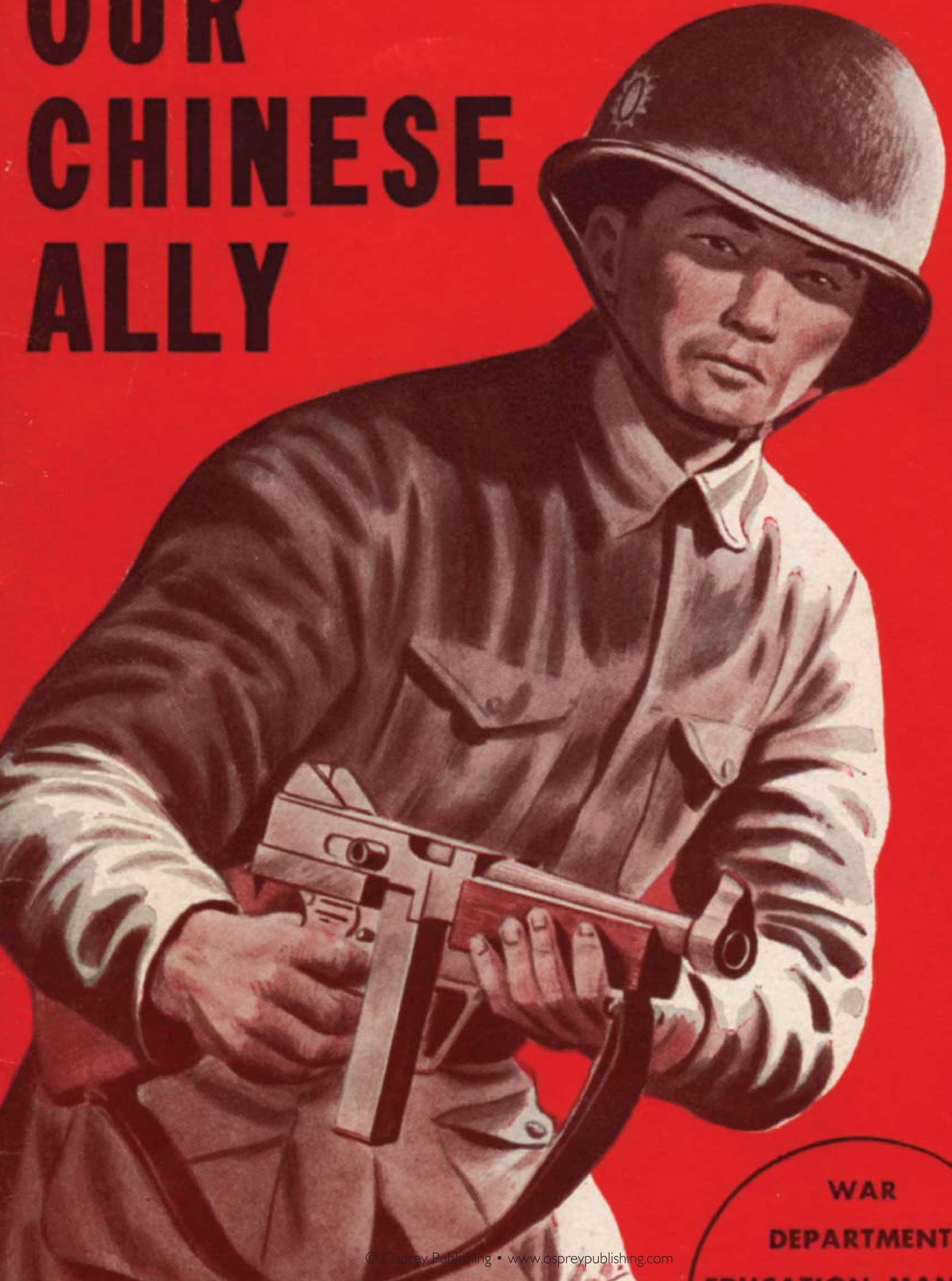


Young policewomen undergo rifle target practice as part of their preparation for the defence of China in 1937. They are aiming their Hanyang 88 rifles from wooden rests which carry the weight of their weapons as they are too heavy for them. As with other public servants in Nationalist China, these policewomen would be expected to support the regular army when the Japanese attacked their city.

buildings were taken over by the various ministries and government staff crowded into any available accommodation. The Nationalists had tried to evacuate as much industry from occupied China as they could and 2,000 firms had been brought to Chungking. These included printing works, textile mills and even steel mills. Universities were also moved to the new Nationalist capital and its students helped to swell the population from 300,000 to over a million, stretching the local resources to breaking point – although rich Nationalist businessmen and party officials could still dine well on food and drink flown into the landing strip which had been built on a sandbank.

From May 1939, the new Nationalist capital began to suffer regular bombing by the Japanese Air Force. Japanese ground forces could not reach the city so the Imperial Air Force was given the task of making the improvised capital as difficult a place to live as possible. In the first two days of bombing alone the city suffered 4,400 dead as there were very few bomb shelters. Raids throughout May accounted for a total of 8,000 dead and a quarter of the city's buildings were destroyed. A shortage of beds for the wounded did not help as only 250 beds were available in Chungking's Municipal Hospital. The population got used to the almost daily raids and had little choice but to adjust their lives to them. For most of the remainder of the war the heavy raids continued – between 1939 and 1942 the city suffered 268 air raids. The government started to build a series of shelters, which by September 1939 could accommodate 200,000 people. These shelters were usually hewn from the rock surrounding the capital and natural caves were extended to provide more shelters. Wealthy residents of Chungking built their own private concrete bunkers with electricity and proper ventilation. Shelters for ordinary residents were often infested with mosquitoes and some may have preferred to take their chances outside. Somehow life continued in the city with public buildings, restaurants and cinemas re-opening as soon as a raid ended. In an effort to protect the city, most of China's available anti-aircraft artillery was transferred to Chungking on Chiang's orders. However, there were never enough of these guns to deter the Japanese so other systems had to be put in place. In an attempt to provide early warnings of the air raids, a system of behind-the-lines guerrilla spotters was introduced. Their radio warnings gave the people a little longer to stop their work and get into their shelters. The only way to properly defend the city was by sending up fighters to counter the bombers but the Nationalist Air Force had been destroyed between 1937 and 1939. Then US air advisor Claire Lee Chennault suggested that Chiang try to purchase a modern fighter force from the USA. General Chennault had been acting as a freelance advisor to Chiang Kai-shek since 1937 and had already suggested the purchase of large numbers of US aircraft after the fall of Wuhan in 1938. On that occasion the aircraft were to have been paid for through a large amount of silver being transferred to the USA from China, but China's notorious bureaucracy had got in the way and no one in the government was prepared to place the orders before it was too late. This time Chiang's finance minister T. V. Soong flew to Washington DC with Chennault in 1940 and persuaded the US to sell China 100 of the latest P-40 fighters. Chennault was also allowed to recruit a force of US pilots to fly the fighters for the Nationalists. The volunteer pilots were well paid and were given the added incentive of a $500 bounty for every Japanese aircraft they shot down.

OUR CHINESE ALLY



WAR
DEPARTMENT

CHAPTER 6

WORLD WAR IN THE EAST

1941–45

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 and their invasions of US, Dutch and British possessions in the Far East drastically altered China's situation. The Japanese Imperial Army and Navy's offensives in Malaya, Burma, the Netherlands East Indies and the Philippines had succeeded against all expectations. Nationalist China was now viewed as a potential ally by the embattled Allies, who in Chiang's view had previously ignored their plight. In the short term, however, there was little that they could do to aid the Nationalists when they themselves were on the verge of defeat. What they could do was give financial aid to Chiang Kai-shek, and a US Congress-approved $500 million loan was

Opposite page
This is the front cover of an information booklet for US soldiers serving alongside their Chinese allies issued by the US War Department in 1943. Along with the idealised image of a US supplied Chinese Nationalist soldier the text inside the book extols the virtues of the China's soldiers and Chiang Kai-shek government.

Opposite page
In May 1942, Nationalist reinforcements are marching to the battle against the Japanese under the watchful eye of their officer. During 1942 Chiang Kai-shek threatened to withdraw from the war effort of the Allies unless more military aid was forthcoming. The collapse of the Allies in South-east Asia and the Pacific gave Chiang a better bargaining position. He was now treated as a fully fledged ally and was promised the armaments he had previously been refused.

backed up by a $630 million 'Lend-Lease' package which would supply military supplies to the Chinese. Chiang knew that there would be a heavy price for this aid – the participation of the Chinese Army in the Allies' campaigns against the Japanese. In Chiang's view, China had sacrificed enough over the previous four years and he hoped that the Allies would now win the war for him. He was confident of the Allies' final victory, even in the dark days of 1942 when he knew that Japan was exhausted militarily. Although he was as determined as ever to defeat the Japanese, he also knew that once they were defeated the Communists would also have to be dealt with. For the next four years his main aim was to conserve what was left of the Nationalist Army in preparation for the final showdown with Mao and his followers.

THE NATIONALIST ARMY 1941–1943

Even after its losses of the previous four years, the Chinese Army of 1941 stood at 2,919,000 front-line troops in 246 divisions and 44 independent brigades. Its second-line strength was an additional 900,000 more men in 70 under-strength divisions and three brigades. A further 30 divisions were under Chiang Kai-shek's personal command and these troops were deployed to ensure the loyalty of his commanders. They were also ready to be used to counter any offensive movements by the Communists against Chiang. The best Nationalist formations in 1941 were the 5th and 6th armies which were regarded as the troubleshooters of the Chinese Army. They were sent to plug gaps in front lines and put down any internal problems as Chiang knew that he could rely on their loyalty. Other reliable formations were the 16 armies under the command of generals Hu Tsung-nan and T'ang En-po – a total of 300,000 men in the north-west of China. The official strength of an infantry division was 9,529 men with 324 machine guns but most were nowhere near their full strength.

In the whole Nationalist Army there were estimated to only be 800 artillery pieces, many of which were simply small mountain guns. Most of the German- and Soviet-supplied heavy weaponry that had not been lost in the years before 1941 was now kept out of harm's way. Tanks and artillery that had survived were sent to safe provinces where it was kept in the hands of the most loyal of Chiang Kai-shek's commanders. This is demonstrated by the fact that between 1943 and

1945, armoured vehicles that had supposedly been destroyed in 1937–38 were photographed in southern and north-western China.

The condition of most Nationalist Army soldiers by 1941 was poor, with rations of the lowest possible standard. According to US General Albert Wedmeyer, the lack of food meant that most Chinese soldiers were ineffective. Never has the saying that an army marches on its stomach been more apt than with the Nationalist Army of 1937–45. Most cases of

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ZÜNDAPP

This special motorcycle unit of the Nationalist Army is pictured for a US magazine in 1941 on 'anti-parachutist' duties. The idea was that if the Japanese tried to send a force of paratroopers into Chinese-held territory these men would be able to respond quickly. Although the men are riding German-supplied motorcycles and have helmets and rifles from the same source it was several years since China had received anything from Germany.

illness in the Nationalist Army were down to the poor diet of the vast majority of the soldiers. If they were lucky they had a diet of rice and vegetables. The minimum daily rations were supposed to be 24 ounces a day but often they received much less. Dysentery caused by poor food and water was a major problem in the Chinese Army. In 1938 the number treated for the disease was 3,000. By 1940 this figure had increased by more than 500 per cent, to almost 1,500,000 men. Some Nationalist soldiers who had been fighting for two or three years by this time were so undernourished that any infection could kill them. Medical care was very poor in the army with some soldiers having no access to a doctor at all. There were only 500 well-trained doctors for the whole 300-division army, which meant that there was only just over one per division. It was little wonder that a large part of the Nationalist Army had little fight left in them by 1942.

THE CHINESE EXPEDITIONARY CORPS IN BURMA 1942

The Japanese advance into Burma in 1941–42 threatened Nationalist China's remaining supply route along the Burma Road. When the British forces in Burma showed signs of collapsing, Chiang Kai-shek offered to send troops to help them. Chiang was reluctant to get involved in Burma but knew that his country's fate was now tied up with that of the Allied powers. His initial offer of help evoked a less than enthusiastic reception by the British, who obviously did not rate the Chinese Army. This caused a great deal of upset in Chungking where Chiang's pride was wounded by their attitude. When, out of desperation, the British agreed to Chiang's offer, to his credit he ordered the organization of a strong relief force.

The 'Chinese Expeditionary Force' included some of the best troops of the Nationalist Army. With a heavy heart Chiang agreed to send his 'elite' 5th and 6th armies, which were both of divisional strength, into Burma. The 5th included the Nationalists' only mechanized division – the 200th – which had almost all of the Russian-supplied T-26 tanks. The expeditionary force comprised the 5th Army with the 22nd, 96th and 200th divisions, the 6th Army with the 49th, 55th and 93rd divisions and the 66th Army with the 28th, 29th and 38th divisions. Each division had a strength of between 7,000 and 9,000 men but only 65 per cent of them were armed, while the other soldiers acted as porters. The weapons in each division were on average 3,000 rifles, 200 light machine guns and 30 medium machine guns. Heavier weaponry was in short supply with most units only having a few mortars and anti-tank guns.

Opposite page
Two heavily camouflaged Nationalist soldiers of the Chinese Expeditionary Corps in Burma in early 1942 stand guard over a Burmese dissident. The situation in Burma in the spring of 1942 was chaotic, with many Burmese choosing to join the pro-Japanese Liberation Army. These Chinese troops have been given the task of guarding this local, suspected by their British Allies of being a Japanese spy or sympathiser.

In January 1942, the 5th and 6th armies advanced westwards into Burma to support the British Army. Lieutenant-General Joseph Stilwell, the newly appointed US chief of the Allied Staff, was ordered to China at the same time. He was to serve as chief advisor to Chiang Kai-shek, who had been given the largely symbolic title of 'Supreme Commander of the Allied China Theatre'. When Stilwell arrived in China in February 1942 he was immediately put in charge of the expeditionary force. As soon as he arrived in Burma he found that his orders were constantly being countermanded by Chiang Kai-shek with his Chinese commanders in secret communication with Chiang behind his back. What orders he personally received from Chiang were confusing and contradictory and too detailed to act upon. Stilwell himself misjudged the situation in Burma and his plans for an offensive soon had to be abandoned when he realized the dire situation that the British and Chinese were in. By 21 March, the 200th Mechanized Division had dug in at Toungoo on the Sittang River and formed a defensive line with the 17th Indian Division which held Prome on the Irrawaddy River. These two formations were given the task of stopping the Japanese 55th Division from advancing north. The 200th managed to hold until their positions until 30 March and proved their fighting spirit against the Japanese. Stilwell ordered the commander of the 5th Army, General Tu Yung-ming, to send the rest of his divisions to the aid of the 200th Division. General Tu stalled and kept his forces in their defensive position until threatened by the advance of the 55th Division whereupon he withdrew them. When Field Marshal Harold Alexander, the Allied commander in Burma, demanded to know why

Soldiers of the Nationalist 38th Division serving in Burma in 1942 fraternize with the crew of a Stuart M3 light tank of the British 7th Armoured Brigade. The Chinese and British co-operated in an operation to relieve the surrounded 1st Burma Division at Yenangyaung. In the background are derricks of the oilfields destroyed by the British when they retreated into India.

they had been withdrawn General Tu replied 'They have been taken away to a safe place.' Alexander asked 'Do you mean that they will take no part in the battle?' to which Tu replied 'Exactly.' When a frustrated Alexander asked 'Then what use are they?', General Tu with Chinese logic explained: 'The 5th Army is our best army because it is the only one with field guns, and I cannot afford to risk those guns. If I lose them the 5th Army will no longer be the best.'[14]

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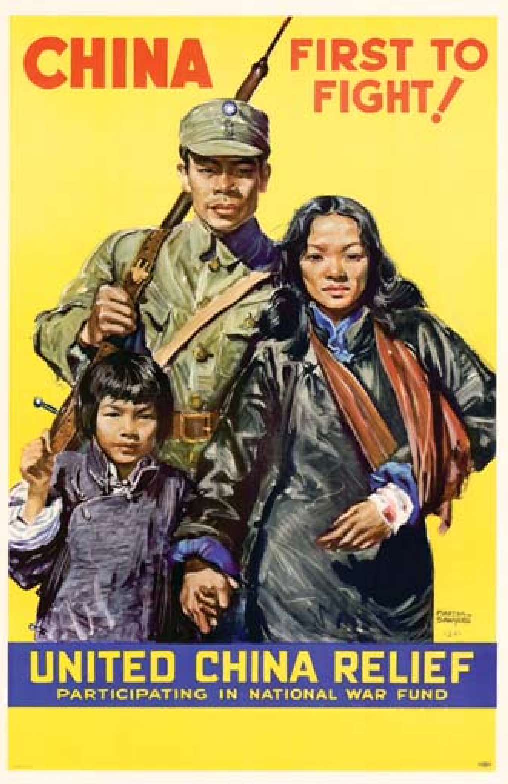
[14] Dick Wilson, *China's Revolutionary War* (1991).



This US poster from 1943 was painted by Martha Sawyer in support of the work of United China Relief. Its message is simple and to the point: that the Chinese had been fighting against the Japanese since 1937. Now that the USA was at war with the Empire of Japan it was important to support the Chinese war effort and to help relieve the suffering of the civilian population

In contrast to the 5th Army, the 113th Regiment of the 38th Division performed one of the heroic feats of the Burma campaign. Its 1,100 men marched with the support of British Stuart light tanks to relieve the 7,000-strong 1st Burma Division in a eight-day operation between 11 and 19 April. The British troops were surrounded at Yenangyaung in central Burma by a similar number of Japanese troops. Although the 1st Division had to leave all its heavy equipment behind, the joint Chinese–British rescue force saved most of the men. Clearly there was nothing wrong with the fighting spirit of the Chinese soldier when well motivated. An Australian journalist interviewed a wounded Chinese private called Wong Yo-kun who had fought at Toungoo in Burma as part of the Chinese Expeditionary Corps in 1942. He was laid out on a stretcher having received a wound in the fighting against the Japanese in which, according to the journalist, he

> killed one Japanese 1st Lieutenant, a 2nd Lieutenant and four soldiers and had captured four bicycles and four rifles and had destroyed three motorbikes. When a Jap attempted to kill his regimental colonel, Wong tackled him with bare hands. He was shot in the neck and a dagger was plunged through his forearm but he still held on till a pistol shot ended the Jap's career and saved the colonel's life.[15]

Apart from the odd Allied success, the unstoppable Japanese 15th Army advance continued through central and northern Burma, driving the British and Chinese forces before it, with the Chinese 6th Army leaving Burma through Kengtung. The 66th Army which had hardly fought in the Burma campaign withdrew up the Burma Road and the 5th Army went to India with Stilwell and the remaining British formations. The 22nd and 38th divisions were sent immediately to newly established training camps in India where Stilwell's plan for a 100,000-strong Allied-trained army was begun. The Burma campaign had been costly for the Nationalist Army in men and more importantly in equipment.

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[15] W. G. Burchett, 'China's Unique Army', *The Melbourne Argus* (29 May 1942).

General Sun Li-jen, the commander of the 38th Nationalist Division, was one of the most capable of the Chinese officers in the 1942–45 period. He commanded his division in the 1942 Burma campaign and, after his unit had been re-equipped by the Allies, he continued in this post during the 1944–45 fighting.

Nationalist troops involved in the fighting had made up 33 per cent of Chiang Kai-shek's strategic reserve before 1942. A particularly hard blow for Chiang was the loss of the 5th and 6th armies' precious German-and Soviet-supplied weapons and equipment.

Allied Training of Chinese Troops 1942–45

The US military knew that for the Chinese Nationalist Army to become a useful military ally against the Japanese the quality of its training had to be increased. General Stilwell's plan called for the training of as many Chinese troops and units as possible as well as their re-arming and re-equipping by the Allies. Although the 22nd and 38th divisions that had retreated to India were part of a defeated army they were still good units. Their troops – already amongst the best in the Nationalist Army – would be the first to receive the training which was intended to put them on a par with US and British soldiers. It was not that the Chinese lacked bravery but they were used to fighting a different kind of war to that they were now expected to fight. The Chinese Army had been brought up with a defensive attitude and part of the Allied training aimed to alter this attitude to include an offensive one. With the confidence of Allied support, most Chinese trainees were soon convinced that in future offensive operations would have a chance of success.

The US plan for the training of Chinese troops in Indian and China involved the setting up of three separate forces. X 'X-Ray' Force was formed in India in 1942, initially from the remnants of the 38th and 22nd divisions of the Nationalist Army which had fought in Burma in the spring of 1942. The 38th Division had been under the command of General Sun Li-jen and the 22nd Division under General Liao Yao-hsiang, two of the most capable Chinese commanders. This 30,000-strong force was reinforced by new trainees who were flown from China into India during the 1942–44 period. The men were to receive training from US instructors and were to be armed by the Americans while their uniforms and equipment would be supplied by the British.

The difficulty of getting Chinese troops across the Himalayas to be trained in India meant that it was sensible to train some in China. A training

A Nationalist soldier guards P-40 fighter aircraft of the 14th US Air Corps carrying the renowned shark-mouth insignia made famous by the American Volunteer Group, better known as the 'Flying Tigers'.

programme for Nationalist troops in China was designed to produce a properly trained and well-armed force which could participate in the reconquest of Burma. On 3 November 1942, Chiang stated that he could provide 20 divisions of 'picked' troops with 'sufficient' artillery although this was fewer than Stilwell had hoped for.

In early 1943 the training centre was opened in the south-western Chinese province of Yunnan and was given the codename Y 'Yoke' Force. The training given at the Y Force training camps was to the same standard of X Force's camps at Ramgarh. A lack of resources meant that the food and equipment provided to the trainees was not up to the same level, but it was still a vast improvement on that provided to the average Nationalist soldier of the period. Under the command of the competent General Wei Li-huang, Y Force grew to an army of 12 divisions, totalling 100,000 men.

A third training programme, codenamed Z 'Zebra' Force, was formed in Kweilin in Kwangsi province with its officer school opening in late 1943. Provided with 2,200 US military advisors, the intention was to eventually train 30 divisions' worth of Nationalist troops. This force was the least well-trained of the three with only a brief crash course in US military practice available. The officers' school was divided into five separate sub-schools with two eight-week courses available for officers and men in signals and veterinary care. Three other six-week courses for officers only covered infantry tactics, engineering and medical care. Although Z Force was never intended to reach the same level of training as X and Y forces, it was given its own objective. The plan was for the force eventually to leave its base in Kweilin and fight its way to the sea in the Canton region where it would link up with US naval forces. It was also to be given the task of defending US air bases in eastern China and to take offensive action against the Japanese Imperial Army in the Yangtze Valley. Chiang Kai-shek visited the training facilities in Kweilin and was impressed, as were his high-ranking officers, with the success of the six-week training course provided by the US instructors. In turn the US instructors also gathered a new understanding of the Chinese soldier and his strengths and weaknesses.

During the 1941–45 period there were several other Allied attempts to train Chinese troops in addition to the main X, Y and Z Force training programmes. The first, known as Mission 204 or 'Tulip Force', was an Australian Army scheme to train Chinese commando-type troops. This small 45-man mission started work in November 1941 initially in Burma where they began training in demolition and other subversive tactics which they could then pass on to Chinese trainees. Three of the mission's six 50-strong commando units were then deployed to China to train guerrillas who were already operating against the Japanese. They took with them large quantities of explosives and other equipment that was desperately needed by the Chinese. The Australians and a few British tried to train the Chinese commandos known as 'Surprise Soldiers' but a lack of food and other supplies hampered them. In September 1942 the first Mission 204 was replaced by new volunteers after most of the original volunteers had fallen ill with dysentery and other tropical diseases. A second contingent arrived in February 1943 and stayed for exactly two years and this time were much better prepared. They successfully trained a large number of Chinese in demolition skills and gave the men basic medical training. When the Japanese Ichi-Go Offensive threatened their base area, the remaining Mission 204 instructors were flown out to safety by the US Air Force.

The second, and by far the largest, training programme for the Chinese was organized by the 'Sino-American Special Technical Cooperative Organization' or SACO. SACO was a US Navy operation which was set up to train thousands of Chinese guerrillas. These guerrillas were

Opposite page
In June 1943 newly trained Nationalist troops march across the parade ground of their Indian training camp behind the Chinese flag. By 1943, large numbers of Chinese soldiers had been through the Allied training course and had been issued, like these men, with British khaki drill uniforms and US steel helmets.

Opposite page
The rare sight of a Japanese prisoner of war is captured on film for the Western press. Photographs of the handful of Japanese who surrendered during the battle of Changteh in December 1943 carried captions like 'Son of the Rising Sun in Defeat'. China's victory in the battle also allowed them to show off weaponry they had captured from the Japanese.

to operate under the command of General Tai Li, the Nationalist Army's head of Intelligence. Although other centres were set up to provide a wide variety of military training, SACO's main focus was its guerrilla training camps.

Camp 1 opened in March 1943 and was followed by another ten, which by the end of the war had trained 50,000 guerrillas. These Chinese guerrillas nearly all belonged to General Tai's quasi-military organization – the 'Loyal Patriotic Army' – and many were issued with US M2 carbines. According to US, estimates the SACO-trained guerrillas fought over 1,000 engagements, in which 27,000 Japanese and Chinese puppet troops were killed. Attacks were concentrated on the Japanese-controlled railways and the guerrillas destroyed 82 railway engines, 243 railway cars, 64 railway bridges and 260 motor vehicles in one year of operation.

Nationalist Guerrillas 1937–45

After the large-scale defeats suffered by the Nationalist Army in 1937 and 1938, thousands of Chinese soldiers were caught behind Japanese lines. The Japanese Imperial Army's rapid advance often meant that there was not time to deal with defeated Chinese troops. Once it became clear that surrendering to the Japanese would mean instant execution, the Nationalist troops knew that the only choice was continued resistance. They soon found out that they would have to operate without the support of the beleaguered Chiang Kai-shek government which was itself in constant retreat in front of the Japanese advance during the 1937–39 period and had little time to organize a guerrilla strategy. Local Kuomintang party officials did their best to organize the soldiers into guerrilla units but their resources were limited. Many of the soldiers joined guerrilla groups which had already been set up by the Nationalist party in occupied China. Although not as well recorded as the Communist guerrillas fighting against the Japanese, a large number of Nationalist guerrillas were operating in occupied China from 1937.

The so-called 'Central guerrillas' operated mainly in the provinces of Kiangsu, Hopei, Hupeh, Anhwei, Honan and Shantung. They tended to be not as well organized as the Communist guerrillas and were often kept in check by their 'larger than life' leaders – in many cases they were like the bandit groups of Chinese history. Leaders were often local Kuomintang officials or civil servants who had little to lose by resisting the Japanese. Some military officers were sent from Chungking but few would have managed to cross China to the main guerrilla strongholds in the eastern

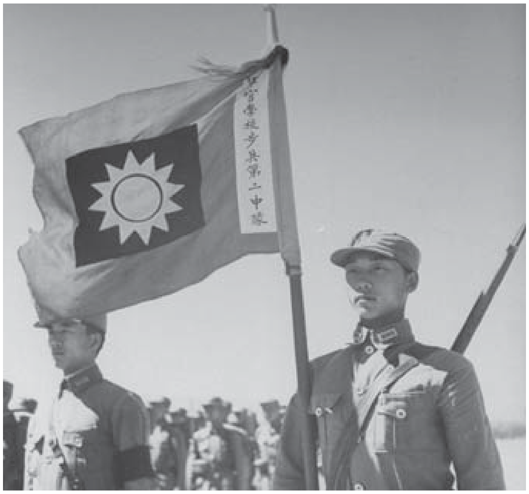
Opposite page
A heavily camouflaged Nationalist machine-gun crew are preparing their Czech-made VZ-37 in southern China in 1943. The VZ-37 was imported in large numbers in the mid-1930s, along with the VZ-26 light machine gun. The crew wear what had become standard Nationalist summer uniform by the early 1940s: ski cap, shirt, shorts and puttees made from rough cotton material.

provinces. Guerrilla leaders included Professor Yang Siu-ling from Peking University, who led 8,000 men in the Taihang Mountains on the Hopei–Shansi border.

Many Nationalist guerrilla groups were led by women like 'Mother Chao' also known as the 'Mother of Guerrillas', who was born in 1880 and who fought the Japanese in north China for 12 years until she 'retired' to Chungking in 1944. Miss 'Golden Flower' Tsai was another female guerrilla leader. She operated in Chekiang province with 2,000 men who were a mix of students, civil servants and former policemen. Shantung province was a particular hot-bed of guerrilla resistance with an estimated 170,000 active fighters. These included the 20,000 men of General Wang Yu-min who operated in the north-east of the province in the early 1940s. The Nationalist guerrillas often found themselves in a three-sided war, fighting not only the Japanese, but their puppet Allies and the Communists. With little support from the government in Chungking, the pro-Nationalist guerrillas had to rely on their own capabilities. Often the only way to get new weapons was to capture them from the Japanese or, more commonly, buy them from Chinese puppet troops in their area. Some had their own arms workshops which turned out limited numbers of hand grenades, rifles and machine guns. Ammunition was always in short supply and most guerrillas were limited to a maximum of 15 bullets with orders to not fire at the enemy until he was only 50 yards away.

Although central government support for the guerrillas was limited, there were some training courses run in Nationalist-controlled China. For instance, the West China Union University at Chengtu in Szechwan province ran a course in firing from horseback! This course was reported to have turned out a number of leaders of mounted Nationalist guerrillas. A 'Training School for Guerrilla Fighters' was also set up at Sian in Shensi province to train guerrillas to use explosives and other subversive tactics.

Any pro-Nationalist guerrillas operating in the same region as a stronger Communist guerrilla force did not usually survive for long. They would sometimes be persuaded by propaganda or more often coerced into joining with the Communist group. Usually any pro-Nationalist leaders and officers would be killed and the rank and file would be absorbed. The systematic destruction of most



A Nationalist cavalry regiment parades in Shansi province in 1943 with its unit flag showing the white sun on a blue sky symbol in the centre of a red field. This unit is stationed in a backwater of the fighting in Shansi which was fought over by the Japanese, Nationalists and Communists between 1937 and 1945. The 'Shansi warlord' Yen Hsi-shan and his 120,000-strong army only kept control of the region around his capital Taiyuan.

Red Army soldiers are seen helping the peasants to break the ground to plant crops in an attempt to counteract the Japanese blockade of Communist-held territory in the 1940s. The leadership of the Communists worked constantly to promote a positive image to the population of liberated areas. They hoped the grateful peasants would help them in their post-war struggle with the Nationalists.

Central guerrilla groups began in the late 1930s and was accelerated after the New 4th Army incident in 1941. In 1939 the large guerrilla group known as the Hopei People's Armies under the command of General Chang Yin-wu was destroyed by the Communists. Communists in Shansi province in 1940 were given detailed instructions as to how to undermine Nationalist guerrilla groups. Point 1 was to tell the local population that the Central guerrillas were 'traitors' and 'pacifists'; point 2 was to infiltrate each component part of the guerrilla force with fifth columnists and then destroy them one by one. The Communists also targeted other guerrilla groups which recruited regardless of political affiliation, including the 50,000-strong force under Lu Cheng-chao in central Hopei province. After the Communists infiltrated his group in 1939 the pro-Nationalist guerrilla leadership was targeted. They were sent to the Communist headquarters at Yenan for 'training' and on arrival they were immediately taken to political prisons for re-education or eventual execution.

For some Nationalist guerrillas, the fight to survive against the Communists led them to co-operate with the Japanese in the latter years of the war. Although this type of collaboration was not widespread, those who did work with the Japanese were most probably motivated by pragmatism. By 1944 some Nationalist guerrilla leaders assumed that the Allies were going to win the war anyway. Having already been attacked by the Communists they saw them as the adversary to be most feared rather than the Japanese.

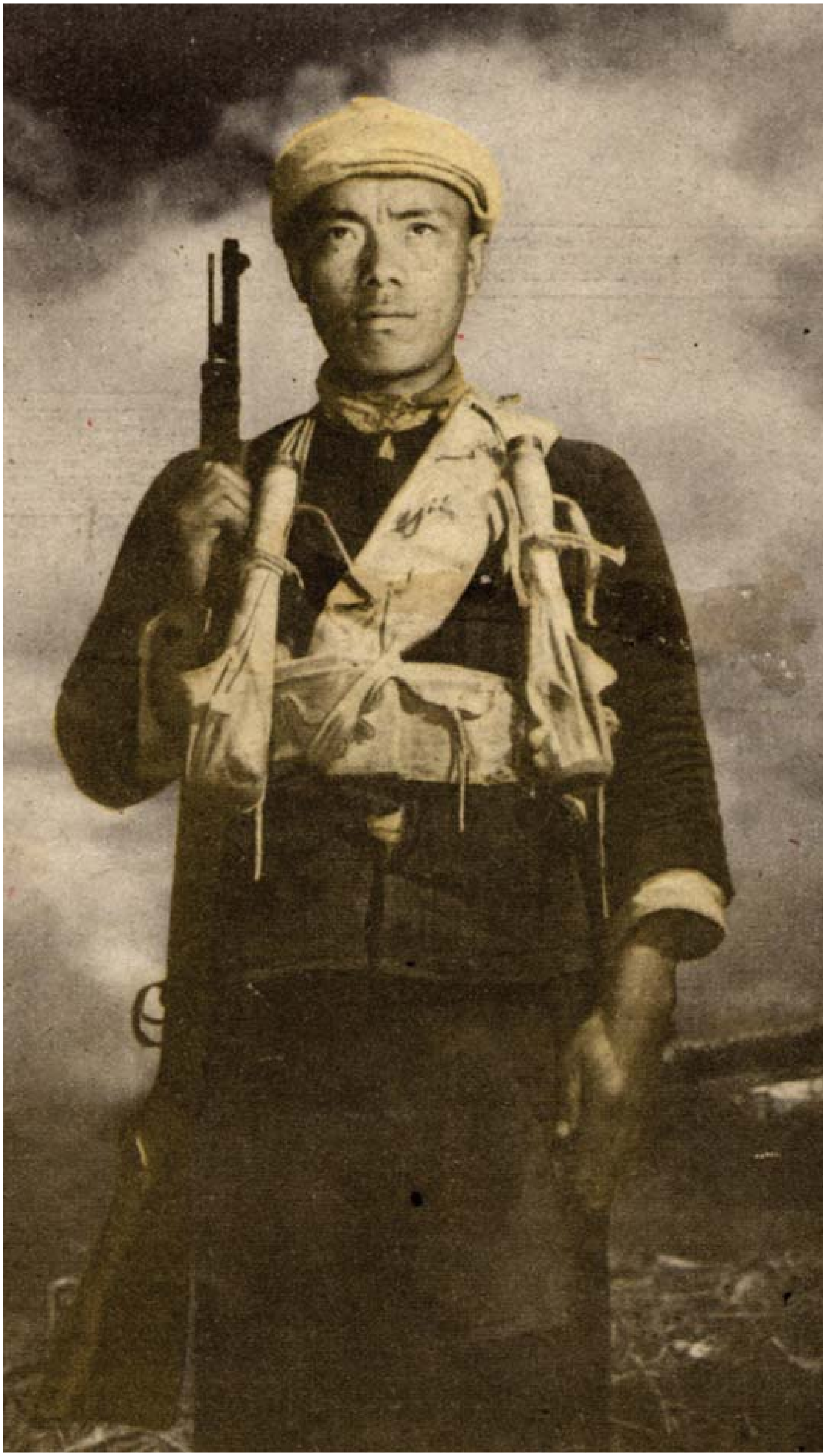
COMMUNIST GUERRILLAS 1937–45

During the 1937–45 period, the brunt of the fighting against the Japanese by the Communists was done by the regular formations like the New 4th and 8th Route armies. Local guerrilla attacks against Japanese outposts and Chinese puppet troops were, however, often undertaken by the Communist irregular forces. These local militia or 'Ming Ping' forces were poorly armed and could expect few rifles when their regular comrades often only had one to every two fighters. Although the Ming Ping had over two million fighters by 1944, they were mostly armed with primitive weaponry made by local blacksmiths. Their role was to try and disrupt the Japanese occupation as much as possible by attacking military convoys, stealing arms from puppet troops and tearing up railway tracks. They set booby traps and laid homemade mines made from porcelain, when these weren't available they even hollowed out stones to fill with gunpowder. These mines were activated by a brave fighter pulling a long piece of string from whatever cover was available. Other homemade weaponry included mass-produced wooden cannons made from elm wood with a 3-inch bore. This dangerous weapon was filled with stones and scrap metal and then fired by pulling a length of string which triggered a matchlock mechanism. According to an eyewitness, personal weapons carried by the guerrillas included 'red tassled spears and broadswords, shotguns, blunderbusses, flintlocks and battered old rifles'. Most of the primitive firearms were made in guerrilla workshops from whatever metal could be found. The only modern firearms issued to the Ming Ping were those that had been rejected by the regular fighters. These were usually those that came in the wrong calibre to use captured Japanese or Nationalist ammunition. Often the Ming Ping would carry them around without any real hope of finding the right bullets to use in them. They could also often capture arms from the local puppet garrison whose troops were as equally frightened by the guerrillas and their Japanese Allies. They would even borrow them for a mission from friendly puppet troops without the knowledge of the Japanese.

Despite these shortcomings, by the early 1940s the Ming Ping had become a major force in the fight against the Japanese simply due to their numbers. By March 1944 there were a reported 1,580,000 of them in northern China and 550,000 in central China, but only 5,000 in the south. Although they fought initially around their own villages, the severe punishments meted out by the Japanese meant that by 1944 many were in newly organized bases or 'soviets'. By 1944 there were 13 bases besides the soviet at Yenan, with four in north China, eight in central China and one on Hainan island. In their bases they received basic military training preparing them for future elevation to the regular Communist Army. When the Japanese eventually surrendered, the Ming Ping were a ready-made reserve force which would go on to fight in the 1946–49 Civil War.

JAPAN'S ANTI-GUERRILLA WARFARE 1937–45

The huge amount of Chinese territory occupied by the Japanese after their first few years of conquest from 1937 to 1939 created many problems for the occupiers. Even though the Japanese decided not to try to extend the territory they controlled after 1941, this still left huge parts of eastern and northern China in their hands. Japan's pacification policies differed between the various regions of China. In the north a simple military solution was used: the Japanese had 150,000 troops performing full-time pacification duties while a further 200,000 garrisoned cities and contained the Nationalists. In central China the Japanese used military force alongside a political and economic solution which tried to engage the population. This involved the setting-up of 'Model Peace zones' in which the local Chinese were expected to control any Communist activity themselves. The Model Peace zones were policed by Chinese puppet police and troops from the Nanking Government Army. These zones had mixed success with some villages and districts embracing them as a way to keep the Japanese out of their area. If guerrilla activity was not challenged by the Nanking Army or the Chinese civilian officials then they and the population could be severely punished. The first Model Peace zone was set up in 1941 and its success led to the setting up of a further nine



This US Signal Corps photograph from 1944 shows a 'typical' Communist guerrilla but appears to be a studio shot staged for the new cameramen. The photograph of the guerrilla featured on the cover of British and US magazines of the time and was intended to show the co-operation between the Communists and the Allies.

zones before mid-1943. North Chinese puppet officials looked at setting up similar zones in their region but by 1943 it was too late for this kind of initiative.

Japan's overall policy to protect occupied China from Communist and other guerrillas was to literally 'ring fence' its territory. They built 7,000 miles of blockades and fencing along the length of China's railways and erected 7,700 fortified posts. In north China alone they had 3,600 miles of fencing and dug 60,000 miles of ditches around the various fortified positions.

The Japanese put a great deal of effort into constructing strong points and forts and some reports say that they built as many as 30,000 during their war. These often isolated forts were a target for guerrilla bands who, according to the same source, destroyed 10,000 before 1945.

Protecting the lines of communication between Japanese-held towns and cities was vital if their garrisons were not to be cut off and isolated. The Japanese protected all the major railways with a system of barbed-wire fences, blockhouses and pill boxes. On some railways, pillboxes to house 20 men were built every third of a mile and patrols were constantly on the move between them. Roads were built running parallel to the railway on either side so that reinforcements could be rushed to an incident in the shortest possible time. Armoured trains and specially adapted armoured cars ran up and down the tracks with specially trained crews manning them. The problem was that there were simply not enough troops available within China to adequately garrison the fortresses and pillboxes and to man the armoured trains. One typically Japanese solution was to make the local population responsible for the safety of the railways. Under this system, the villages within 8 miles either side of the railway were made responsible for its smooth running. If the track was destroyed by guerrillas then the local population would have to repair it or face the consequences. Any village that did not protect the railway in their vicinity would have its leaders and other villagers executed. The Japanese even thought up the idea of special patrols of local children who would walk the railway line to avert guerrilla attacks. Eventually this Japanese-run railway protection scheme involved about 11 million reluctant Chinese.

The brutal treatment meted out to the Chinese population by the Japanese since 1937 had not succeeded in forcing the people into submission. In fact the overbearing attitude of the Japanese to the Chinese in general only increased opposition to their rule. The Japanese regarded the Chinese as 'sub-humans' and described them as so much

Seen here in the 1940s, Lin Piao was one of the most important military leaders of the Communist Red Army from 1926 until 1949. He led the 1st Army Corps on the Long March in 1934–35 and won Manchuria for the Communists in the 1946–49 Civil War. After the civil war he held high office in the People's Republic until his fall from favour after the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s.

'wood' rather than flesh and blood. The lives of the Chinese, whether men, women or children, were of little consequence. Chinese men were killed, women were raped and then killed and children were regarded by many Japanese as 'spawn' to be eradicated. Of course there were humane Japanese but they were in a small minority. Given their treatment by the Japanese the population in guerrilla-held areas felt they had little choice but to join the resistance.

With no genuine policy of 'hearts and minds', the Japanese had to find ways to control the growing guerrilla problem. The Imperial Army had well established anti-guerrilla tactics which they had developed over many years of occupying Korea, Formosa and Manchuria. The Japanese constantly patrolled the countryside around their garrisons in various-sized units depending on the resistance expected. When a guerrilla base was located, a force of three to four divisions would be concentrated for an operation to surround and sweep the area. However, the sweeps would usually force the guerrillas to evacuate the area and they would simply return after the Japanese had moved on. For this reason the Japanese would usually aim to destroy everything in their path including the local population, their livestock and any shelter. This so-called 'Three Alls' policy was introduced widely after the Communists' Hundred Regiments Campaign of 1940.

The 'Three Alls' policy meant a total war against the civilian population in areas under Communist control. The three alls referred to the Japanese promise to 'kill all, burn all and loot all' in their path to punish those who supported the reds. It was hoped that this policy would force any surviving civilians in areas given this brutal treatment to stop aiding the guerrillas. When Japanese units on a 'clean up' anti-bandit operations received intelligence that a particular village or hamlet was supporting the Communists they would first kill all the population, and then carry off or destroy all the livestock and any crops. This was done because the Japanese did not want to risk the guerrillas returning to try and find food in the empty village. This brutal policy began to bear fruit with many

Opposite page
This Japanese propaganda magazine cover from 1943 shows a Chinese puppet soldier of the Nanking Army having a cigarette break with two Japanese soldiers. In reality the relationship between the Japanese and their Chinese 'allies' was not particularly good. Most Japanese would have despised the Chinese as turncoats who had betrayed their oath to the Nationalist Army.

communities refusing to shelter the Communists, forcing them to keep on the move at all times. When these mobile guerrilla forces were located by the Japanese the 'Prisoner's Cage Tactic' was used to force them into a small area. This tactic involved a series of criss-crossing marches by well-armed columns of Japanese troops often supported by Chinese puppet troops. Ditches would be dug about 20ft wide and the earth removed from the ditches would be used to form earth walls. The combination of the man-made barriers and the constantly moving columns of troops were meant to eventually trap the guerrillas.

When the guerrilla forces were too strong to be defeated in this way, a blockade system was used to entrap them in their bases. One system used when blockading an area to enclose a guerrilla force was to use three rings of fencing. The first ring would be 3–5 miles outside the blockaded area, the next 7–10 miles outside and the third 10–12 miles outside. Any gates in the fencing would be heavily guarded and protected by blockhouses and strong points. Japanese troops surrounded the Shensi soviet with 7,000 miles of moats, stockades and barbed wire which was intended to bottle the Communists up inside their base area. To reinforce the blockade a series of 10,000 forts and blockhouses were built at intervals around the fencing to keep the Communists inside. Although the blockade could never be 100 per cent effective, only small Communist units could break through to raid Japanese-held posts. Although these raids were a nuisance, they were not a threat to the Japanese control of towns and cities. Any larger formations that did break through the blockade could be tracked down by the Japanese and their puppet troops and annihilated.

In an effort to counter the guerrilla threat, from 1943 the Japanese formed special anti-guerrilla units which were given special covert operation training. These Special Security Units or SSUs operated in small hand-picked units and worked largely on their own initiative. Using a network of spies, informants and their own scouting system they built up good local intelligence in order to track down guerrilla bands and destroy them. Their troops only carried small arms and generally travelled light with as little spare ammunition and other equipment as possible. Operating mainly at night they laid ambushes for enemy patrols and assassinated local guerrilla leaders and their families. They often disguised themselves as Chinese peasants and usually wore their soft cloth shoes so as not to alert the enemy. These tactics proved very successful and really played the guerrillas at their own game by undermining their peace of mind. The success of the SSUs is illustrated by the record of one

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company-strong unit which operated from September 1943 until June 1944. During this period the unit killed 219 guerrillas while losing nine dead and 13 wounded themselves. Unfortunately for the Japanese the number of Special Security Units was limited and although undoubtedly a success there were simply not enough of them to control the huge numbers of guerrillas. By the early 1940s the Japanese knew that all they could hope to achieve was to contain the guerrilla threat. Reductions in troop numbers in China as the war in the Pacific and South-east Asia turned against them meant containment was the best they could hope for.

THE NANKING PUPPET ARMY 1940–45

During the late 1930s the Japanese established various puppet governments in occupied China with each under the jurisdiction of different Imperial Army commands. At first it suited the Japanese to keep the puppet governments fragmented but as the fighting in China went into its third year their attitude began to change. Chiang Kai-shek's stubborn refusal to make peace with the Japanese despite the disasters which had befallen his armies angered them. Having given up any hope of making an agreement with Chiang, the Japanese now looked at other ways to maintain control over occupied China. Instead of relying on separate puppet governments for north, central and southern China they looked to establish one unified government for the whole of the country. In April 1940 they sanctioned the establishment in Nanking of a new so-called Re-organized government under the presidency of former Kuomintang politician, Wang Ching-wei. Wang's overtly pro-Japanese government was intended to rival Chiang Kai-shek's Chungking government and used all the trappings of the Nationalist government. Flags and other insignia were the same as the Nationalists' as Wang claimed to be the true political successor to Sun Yat-sen. Wang's bitter rivalry with Chiang Kai-shek in the 1920s and 1930s now led him to betray his country and to allow himself to be made the figurehead for the 'puppet' government.

The Re-organized government was allowed its own token army, navy and air force. Its navy had a few ex-Nationalist ships donated by the Japanese including several which had been re-floated. The air force had a handful of trainer and transport aircraft. Fighter aircraft were promised by the Japanese, but they had no intention of keeping their word. The 300,000-strong Nanking Army was poorly armed, received little

The commander of a unit of ‘puppet’ troops of the Nanking Army inspects his men during an anti-bandit operation. Hundreds of thousands of Nationalist troops joined the Nanking Army which was under the control of the Wang Ching-wei government. Their motives were mixed but the vast majority were simply given a stark choice between serving the Japanese or death. After 1945 many ex-puppet soldiers were readily incorporated into both the Communist and Nationalist armies.

training and was only allowed to go on operations with the Japanese. To placate Wang Ching-wei and his army commanders, a few obsolete Japanese light tanks and some light artillery pieces were loaned to the elite units of the Nanking Army. However, the Japanese Imperial Army’s complete lack of trust in the Nanking troops meant that most units had only small arms and a few machine guns. Furthermore, the amount of ammunition issued per rifle was limited, sometimes to as little as five rounds, in case of mutiny by the puppet troops. Despite their unreliability, the Japanese had little choice but to increasingly utilize the Nanking troops as their own numbers in China were depleted. Many Japanese units were transferred to the Pacific theatre from 1942 onwards and the Nanking Army was often expected to fill the gaps. In nearly all cases the Nanking troops proved to have little stomach for the fight and most fought simply to ‘fill their rice bowls’. After 1940, the lightly armed units of the Nanking Army were sent out on anti-guerrilla operations with the Japanese Imperial Army. The Nanking units were usually used as auxiliaries by the Japanese who did not trust their soldiers. As many of the puppet troops had formerly served in the Nationalist Army and had then surrendered to the Japanese, they were seen by the Japanese as unworthy comrades. Occasionally the Nanking Army did operate independently of the Japanese but any operation undertaken without the Imperial Army was usually doomed to failure. When the Japanese surrendered in China in August 1945 most puppet troops were accepted at least temporarily into either the Communist or Nationalist Army. If Wang Ching-wei had not died of cancer in Tokyo in 1944, he would have been amongst the puppet officials and high-ranking officers executed for treason by the Nationalists in 1945.

THE MANCHUKUOAN ARMY 1937–45

From the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 the Japanese expected their puppet Manchukuoan Army to be involved in the fighting in north China. Little is known about their role in the initial invasion of northern China but reports of Manchurian soldiers serving in China continued until 1945. After the defeat of the anti-Japanese fighters in the early 1930s the army in Manchukuo faced little resistance before 1945. The army, navy and air force of Manchukuo were kept just strong enough to ward off any guerrilla threat but not well-armed enough to pose a danger to the Japanese Kwangtung Army. As with all the puppet armies set up by the Japanese in China since 1931, the idea was that any mutiny by these often unreliable troops could easily be dealt with by the Japanese. By 1944 the Manchukuoan Army had grown to a strength of up to 220,000 men in a total of ten infantry brigades, 21 mixed brigades, two independent brigades, one Guard brigade and six cavalry brigades. There was also a pacification division with three infantry regiments and one artillery regiment, and a cavalry division with two brigades and a battalion of horse artillery. Other smaller units included seven independent cavalry regiments and artillery was made up of 11 heavy artillery units of unspecified strength and eight anti-aircraft regiments. This not inconsiderable force was only armed with a small number of light tanks and cast-off Japanese field guns and out-dated anti-aircraft guns. When the Soviet Red Army invaded Manchukuo in overwhelming force in August 1945 the Manchukuoan Army was quickly annihilated. With 76 battle-hardened divisions from the European front and an estimated 4,500 armoured vehicles, the Soviet invasion force rolled over any defences. Some mounted units of the Manchukuoan Army are reported to have fought in the initial stages of the invasion but most of these unwilling soldiers soon surrendered.

THE BURMESE FRONT 1943–45

The Chinese troops trained at the Allied training centres in India and China from 1942 to 1943 were mainly destined for the retaking of Burma from the Japanese. The two Allied-trained Nationalist formations on the Burmese Front were to be given co-ordinated tasks during the 1944–45 fighting. First the Allied-trained and equipped X Force was to advance south-eastwards from its Indian bases into northern Burma. It was intended that at the same time the US-trained Y Force, which had been trained in Yunnan province in south-western China, was to advance north-westwards into Burma. The plan was that the two forces would link up somewhere in northern Burma, depending on the speed of advance of each formation. By 1943 X Force had been built up from the veterans of the 22nd and 38th divisions and the Chinese soldiers flown over the Himalayas into two new formations. With Stilwell in overall command, X Force now consisted of the New 1st Army under the command of General Sun Li-jen, and the New 6th Army under General Liao Yao-hsiang. Both the Chinese commanders were fine officers admired by Stilwell and his US staff. Its troops were well trained, well uniformed and equipped and armed with the best that the Allies could provide. This well-motivated force of 50,000 men moved into position in December 1943, ready to take the offensive against the Japanese in Burma. At the same time Y Force, which had already taken up forward positions along the Burma–China border on the Salween River, was supposed to be preparing its own offensive into Burma. Chiang Kai-shek, however, was reluctant to risk Y Force in the fighting in Burma and would have preferred to keep it in Yunnan. The powerful Yunnan governor had ambitions of autonomy from the central government and Chiang wanted Y Force to keep him in check. Chiang only finally gave in after Stillwell and others threatened to withdraw arms and other supplies. All the prevarications delayed Y Force's preparations and it was X Force which went on the offensive first.

Wang Ching-wei was a former anti-Manchu Revolutionary and Kuomintang politician. His longstanding rivalry with Chiang Kai-shek led to him becoming a 'quisling' of the Japanese in 1940. He formed an alternative Nationalist government in Nanking and became its figurehead leader with no real power. His premature death in 1944 from cancer saved him from execution as a traitor by the Nationalists. Here he wears the officer's uniform of the pro-Japanese Nanking Army which was purposely almost identical to that of the Nationalist Army.

On 21 December 1943 X Force advanced from its forward base in northern Assam into northern Burma and clashed with the Japanese almost immediately. They were advancing through the wild jungle of the Hukawng Valley, which was defended skilfully by the Japanese. In support of X Force was the special US commandos known as Merrill's Marauders after their commander Brigadier-General Frank Merrill. The 2,750 Marauders advanced along the flanks of X Force but their numbers were more than halved by May 1944, mainly through sickness. In northern Burma X Force faced the Japanese Imperial Army's 18th Division, which had its headquarters at the town of Myitkyina. Although the advance through northern Burma was a little too pedestrian for Stilwell's liking it was professional and followed the training learnt at Ramgarh. The Chinese would have to march for 200 miles against determined Japanese resistance across 6,000-metre

This close-up of a soldier of the Manchukuoan Army in the early 1940s shows the modern Japanese-style uniform worn by these puppet troops. The Japanese influence extends beyond the uniform to the equipment and the Arisaka rifle supplied by them. He takes aim on the shooting range under the watchful eye of a Japanese military instructor.

mountain ranges and generals Sun and Liao were bound to be cautious.

X Force did not reach its first major objective – the town of Maingkwan – until 7 March 1944. When it fell, road-builders moved in to work on the Burma Road. The next target for X Force was the vital Japanese-held airfield and town of Myitkyina which was to be attacked by the 42nd and 150th Nationalist regiments along with 1,300 of Merrill's Marauders. Complete surprise was achieved when the attack on the airfield began on 17 May and it soon fell. Myitkyina, defended by a garrison of 4,600, was a different matter and initial attacks by the two Chinese regiments were repulsed. A siege of the town then ensued with the besiegers suffering severely from Scrub Typhus which was endemic to the region. Eventually the Chinese were able to have an infantry division airlifted into the area and the town finally fell on 3 August after two and a half months. The Japanese commander escaped through the jungle with 600 men, leaving behind 187 prisoners and 3,800 dead. In the meantime heavy fighting had been taking place since April in the Mogaung Valley where the strategically important town of Kamaing fell after a two-month siege on 16 June.

After the fall of Myitkyina in August the New 1st Army advanced southwards towards the town of Bhamo. They surrounded the town in mid-November 1944 and it fell on 15 December. General Sun's troops then continued to advance throughout December 1944 and January 1945 and took the towns of Namyu, Namkham and Mong Yu in quick succession. In March the New 1st Army took Lashio to the south along the Burma Road and moved towards a union with Y Force in the east.

General Wei Li-huang's Y Force finally crossed the Salween River on 11 May 1944 with one of Stilwell's most trusted officers, Frank Dorn, as senior advisor. The advance was slow, and Y Force was fighting as much against the difficult terrain as they were against the fanatical Japanese. Having crossed the 5,000-feet deep Salween Gorge they captured several Japanese strongholds in the Kaolikung Mountains.

The Japanese 56th Division was also fighting hard and would not give an inch; its troops even resorted to cannibalism when they ran out of food. Despite the undoubted bravery of the Chinese soldiers, the limitations of their hasty training was at times cruelly exposed. Despite their US training, the officers sent their troops into frontal assaults on well-prepared Japanese positions. A US advisor who witnessed the fighting on the Salween Front in 1944 described the bravery of Chinese officers who led their troops in futile attacks on well-defended Japanese positions:

> As a demonstration of sheer bravery the attacks were magnificent but sickeningly wasteful. Some platoon leaders were killed within one or two metres of the enemy embrasures and several of the best company and battalion commanders were killed and wounded in personal leadership of their troops. A general coordinated assault might have overrun the positions by sheer esprit and weight of numbers, but adjoining or supporting units would idly watch some single squad or platoon get mowed down in a lone advance, then try it on their own front.[16]

It took a month for Y Force to advance 20 miles towards its two objectives of Lungling in the south and the Yunnanese city of Tengchung on the northern sector of their front. After a break for the rainy season when no fighting was possible, the Chinese advance continued. Tengchung was finally captured on 14 September after a two-month siege where the Japanese defenders fought to the last man. The Japanese were accused of using poison gas during the battle, as they had done on several occasions during the Sino-Japanese War. In January 1945 the last Japanese-occupied town in Yunnan, Wanting, fell to the Chinese. Y Force had now advanced far enough to be able to link up with troops from X Force at Mu-se on 21 January 1945. This link-up allowed the first convoys of trucks to transport supplies into China along the Ledo Road. The re-opening of the Burma

Next page
A unit of Manchukuoan cavalry patrol the area around their garrison in an attempt to keep Chinese Communist guerrillas in check. The cavalry of the puppet army were some of the better soldiers and came in useful on the open terrain of Manchuria. Their unit flag is the national flag of Manchukuo, which was abolished along with the state in August 1945.

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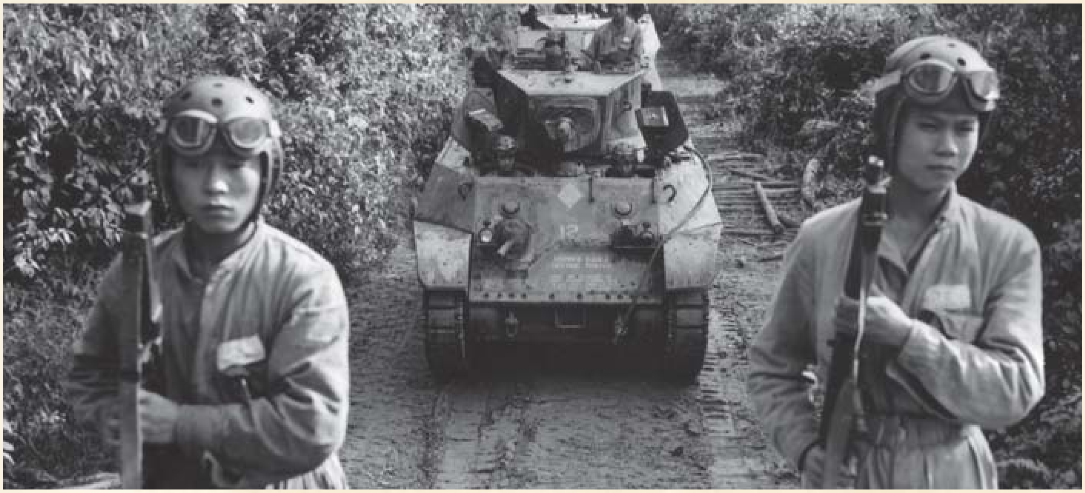
[16] Lloyd. E. Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction* (2002).

The 1st Provisional Tank Group

As part of X Force the US formed an armoured unit made up of Chinese and American personnel and named it the 1st Provisional Tank Group. It was formed at Ramgarh training centre on 1 October 1943 and was composed of six provisional tank battalions. It was commanded by US Army Colonel Rothwell H. Brown, who had served in China in the early 1930s and had a good relationship with his Chinese allies. The 1,800 Chinese in the unit were to be assisted by a 231-strong US contingent who would service the tanks and help crew them. They were to be kept at a strength of 100–125 M3A3 light tanks at all times although this model was regarded as obsolete by the US advisors. Training of the Chinese recruits took two months and the trainees – some as young as 14 years old – were reported to be enthusiastic and quick learners. However, they could only be given basic crew training and were not given tactical training until they were in the field. The 1st Battalion was sent into Burma in January 1944 while the 2nd Battalion stayed at Ramgarh waiting for new personnel.

They were to fight alongside the Nationalist 22nd Division and had their first encounter with the Japanese on 3 March. They were reinforced in April 1944 with a small number of Sherman M4A4 medium tanks, which were formed in two platoons. When the 2nd Battalion arrived in Burma in June 1944, one platoon was given to each battalion. The performance of this Provisional Tank Group during 1944–45 was mixed, definitely not helped by the fact that some crewmen had been given only a days' worth of driver training. US personnel were frustrated by the lack of co-ordination between Chinese-crewed tanks and their supporting Nationalist infantry. They also complained that in joint US–Chinese attacks the Nationalist tank crews hung back letting the Americans do the fighting. As with all joint operations between the Allies and the Chinese in the Second World War, the often 'negative' attitude of the Nationalist troops was frustrating for the US personnel. Nonetheless, some journalists praised the performance of the Chinese crews, many of who they said had previously not even seen a motor vehicle never mind driven one into battle.

Regardless of the problems, the 1st Provisional Tank Group fought through northern Burma as part of the Chinese Expeditionary Army until August 1945. In December 1945 the unit was officially de-activated and its tanks were handed over to their Chinese crews who used them during the Chinese Civil War of 1946–49.



Tanks of the Chinese Army's 1st Provisional Tank Group advance down a road which has been strengthened with logs in June 1944. The provisional tank group was equipped with M3A3 Stuart light tanks, seen here, and Sherman M4A4 medium tanks. The Chinese crewmen who ride rather precariously on the engine of their tank are both armed with US-supplied Thompson sub-machine guns.

and Ledo roads meant that for Chiang Kai-shek the Burma campaign was over. Some of Y Force were moved back into China to take part in attacks on Japanese-held cities in Kwiechow and Hunan provinces.

THE NATIONALIST ARMY 1944–45

The involvement of the Allies with the Chinese Nationalist Army had made little difference by 1944. Apart from the divisions trained in India and west China by US advisors, the vast majority of the Nationalist Army was in the same parlous state that it had been in in 1941. Although substantial amounts of arms and other military supplies had been sent to the Chinese troops in India, the rest of the army had received little. In October 1944, Nationalist general Ho Ying-chin stated that since April 1942 China had received a total amount of 30,000 tons of US military aid. He claimed that the only weapons received by the Nationalist Army in China directly rather than through India were 60 75mm PACK howitzers with 60,000 shells, 30 Boyes anti-tank rifles with 5,120 rounds and 60,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition. The fact that Allied leaders were quoted as saying the Chinese wasted the 'excessive amounts' of military aid they received was extremely annoying to them. The figures show that only 2 per cent of the total Lend-Lease arms sent to the USA's Allies actually went to the Chinese.

This meant that the Nationalists were still reliant on the armaments they had purchased in the 1930s. These included rifles and machine guns from every arms-manufacturing country in the world. The variety of armaments used by the Nationalist Army created a nightmare for its logistics officers. It was probably a good thing that the army had not grown appreciably since 1938 despite Chiang Kai-shek's best efforts. By the time the first heavy Japanese offensives had ended in 1938 the Nationalist Army had a

Soldiers of Y Force, the Chinese Expeditionary Corps trained in Yunnan province by US instructors, are seen in positions above the River Salween in June 1943. The river formed the border between Japanese-occupied Burma and western China and Y Force finally crossed it in 1944. Eventually these troops would join up with X Force advancing from India in September the same year.

General Joseph. W. Stilwell, known as 'Vinegar Joe' because of his straight talking and for his un-diplomatic attitude to the Nationalist Chinese government, inspects newly trained troops in India in 1943. A fluent Chinese speaker, Stilwell had been sent by the US government to command their forces in the China–Burma–India theatre. His ideas about the reduction of the Chinese Army amongst other issues led to a poor relationship with Chiang Kai-shek. Although Stilwell had no respect for Chiang and most of the other high-ranking Nationalist officers, he had great respect for the ordinary Chinese soldier.

reported strength of four million men. For each of the next six years the government enlisted an average of 1.5 million new recruits which should have meant that by 1944 the army had a strength of 12 million men. However, the official 1944 strength of the army was still estimated at about four million, which meant that eight million troops had either been killed, died of disease or deserted. Allowing for the estimated one million battlefield deaths from 1938 to 1944 when the fronts were relatively quiet, this still leaves seven million men unaccounted for. Many of those missing seven million had died, unreported, of disease or hunger, while others had gone over to the Japanese after they began to recruit 'puppet' troops after 1940. Others had simply deserted and gone back to their villages, where some would have been conscripted or 'press ganged' back into the army.

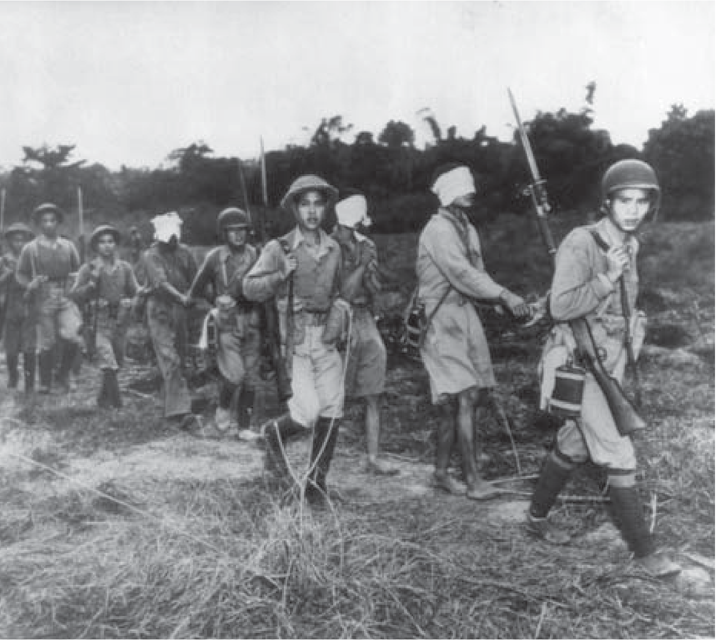
The life of the average Nationalist Army recruit in the 1930s and 1940s was grim to say the least. With a poor diet, no medical care, little rest and relaxation and, by the early 1940s, often little or no pay, few men were willing to volunteer. Once in the army the soldier could expect no leave and very few recruits ever returned home when they had been sent on campaign outside their home area. With limited pay, soldiers could not even send money home to their families and a commissariat as a European army would have known it did not exist. The life of a new recruit in the Nationalist Chinese Army was hard and the recruiting process was described by Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby in *Thunder Out of China* published in 1945:

> China had a conscript army, recruited in the simplest and most cold blooded fashion. Chinese recruiting had none of the trimmings of number drawing, physical examination or legal exemption. Chungking decided how many men it wanted and assigned a certain quota to each province; the quota was subdivided for each county and village and then the drafting began. In some areas it was relatively honest, but on the whole it was unspeakably corrupt.

> No one with money need fight; local officials, for a fat profit, sold exemptions to the rich at standard open prices. Any peasant who could scrape the money together bought his way out. The men who were finally seized were often those who could least afford to leave their families. When a district had been stripped of eligible men, passers by were waylaid or recruits were bought from organized press gangs at so much a head. Men were often killed or mutilated in the process; sometimes they starved to death before they reached a recruiting camp. Men in the Chinese army never had any leave, never went home, rarely received mail. Going into the army was a death sentence and more men died on their way to the army, through the recruiting process, the barbarous training camps, and long route marches, than after getting into it.

The abuses of new Nationalist Army recruits continued even when Chiang Kai-shek ordered executions of corrupt or incompetent recruiting officers. Out of the total of 1,670,000 men recruited in 1943, a staggering 44 per cent died or deserted on the way to their units! Another statistic shows that between 1937 and 1945 an estimated 1,400,000 recruits – one in ten – died before they reached the front line through mistreatment and neglect. The morale of Nationalist troops was not helped by the fact that their wages no longer paid for even the basics. Because of the crippling inflation in China between 1937 and 1944, the purchasing power of a Chinese soldiers pay had declined by 85 per cent by 1944.

Considering all these problems, it was amazing that the Nationalist Army was still fighting at all by 1945. Some troops stationed away from the main war fronts had however had a relatively easy war. One US eyewitness commented how it seemed that some Nationalist units had seen constant action during the war while others had seen none at all. He reported that he had seen a parade of Chinese troops in Hunan province in the spring of 1945 who were off to fight for the first time in the war. He said they wore immaculate 'German grey-green uniforms with black painted German M35 helmets' just like the uniforms worn by the troops in August 1937.



A Chinese patrol in Burma in 1944 brings in three trussed and blindfolded Japanese prisoners of war. The Nationalist troops belong to X Force, the Allied-supplied divisions which were trained at Ramgarh in India from 1942. Joint US and British aid is shown by the two types of steel helmet being worn by the Chinese soldiers.

Private Koo Ho-king of the 39th Division of the 6th Nationalist Army, aged seven, on the Burma Road in July 1944. Young boys like this would attach themselves to Chinese units to act as porters and general helpers and in extreme circumstances might have to fight.

Some Chinese soldiers still retained their will to fight, driven on by their thirst for revenge against the Japanese. In 1944, US General Arms commented on the differences between the average US soldier and his Chinese equivalent: 'This is perhaps the greatest difference between a Chinese and an American soldier. The American soldier asks when he is going out to the front. But the Chinese asks when he is going back to the front.' He continued, 'When a man has gone through the kind of hell a Chinese soldier has gone through in the last seven years and is still anxious to go back and get even with the enemy.'

In September 1943, General Stilwell gave an honest appraisal of the Nationalist Army to Chiang Kai-shek in which he stated that many of 300 divisions on the Chinese order of battle had never been in combat. He also said that 30 of the Nationalist divisions were commanded by officers whose loyalties were solely to Chiang. The other divisions were commanded by officers whose loyalty was to local warlord or provincial governors. When it came to equipment he estimated that the Chinese Army had one million rifles, 83,000 machine guns and 7,800 trench mortars. The army's artillery he said was widely dispersed and no division had sufficient guns for their needs. In total he said that there were 1,330 artillery pieces in China, of diverse calibres and origin. However, a separate report of 1943 was less optimistic about the number of artillery pieces in service with the Chinese, it claimed that the army had a total of 109 Russian, 31 US, 65 Japanese, 70 German, 135 French and 340 other artillery pieces in service.

Stilwell's damning report went on to describe Chinese units as being far below strength, and soldiers were said to be 'unpaid, poorly fed and poorly clad'. Diseases that accompany malnutrition and unsanitary camp conditions were rampant and were further debilitating unit strengths. Stilwell said that the Chinese had not succeeded in creating an adequate supply system, and consequently troop movements were made only with the most extreme difficulty. Trucks, and motor fuel to run them, were almost non-existent in China and there was no organization for keeping up a steady flow of rations to troops on the march. Stilwell described the Nationalist Army as a totally 'immobile' force because of the total lack of transport.

General Stilwell was openly critical about Chiang's conduct of the war and was particularly frustrated with the Nationalists' continued campaign against the Communists. There were 400,000 of the better Nationalist troops blockading the Communists into their base areas in 1943. In

September he urged Chiang to lift the blockade and use these troops elsewhere and then delivered a message from President Roosevelt. This hard-line letter told Chiang to accept Stilwell's total command of the Chinese theatre or accept reduced levels of US aid. An infuriated Chiang demanded Stilwell's recall to the USA because of his lack of respect for the Nationalist leader. Stilwell was not recalled from China for over a year, however, and only left for the USA in October 1944.

THE COMMUNIST ARMY 1941–45

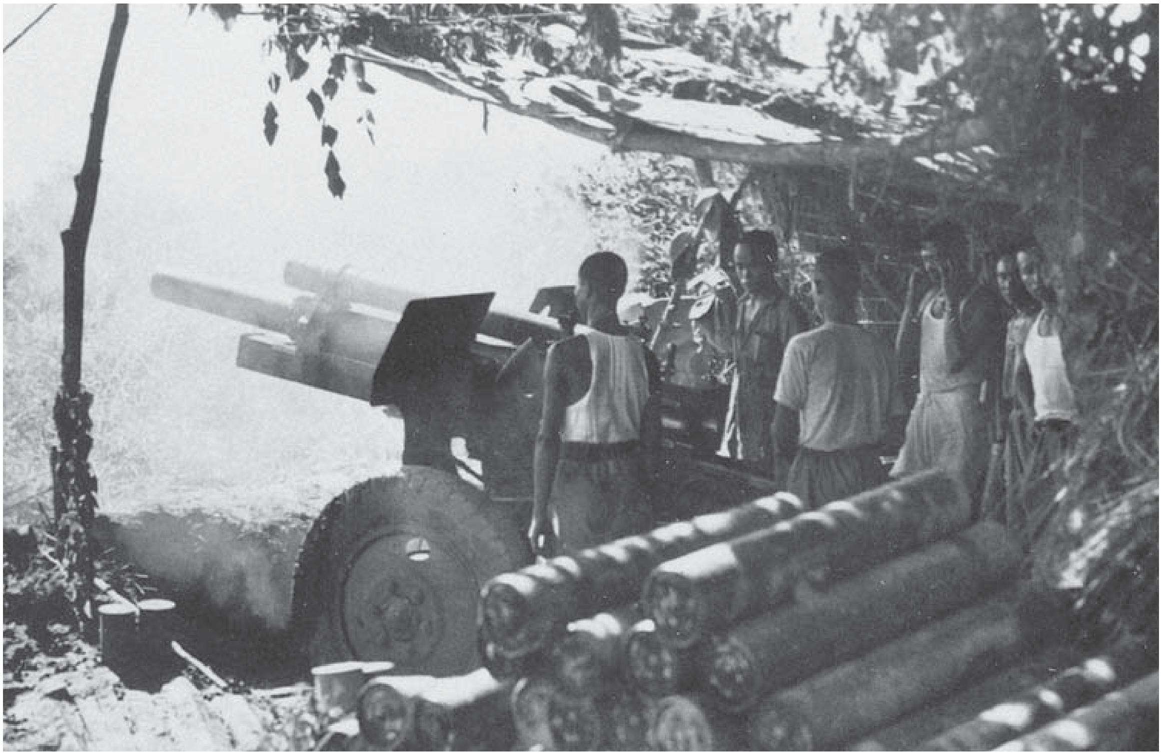
The Communists had gradually recovered after the disastrous Hundred Regiments Campaign of 1940 and the attacks on the New 4th Army in 1941. The three divisions which made up the 8th Route Army, which had officially been renamed the 18th Group Army, controlled six military regions in northern China. In central China, the New 4th Army controlled eight small regions and there were smaller formations in the Canton region and on the island of Hainan. Although the soldiers of the 18th

In August 1944, soldiers of the 22nd Nationalist Division march along the strategic Ledo Road. This main supply road between China and Burma was built by the Allies with thousands of Chinese labourers to replace the Burma Road which was cut by the Japanese in 1942. The 22nd Division was one of the newly trained units of the Nationalist Army equipped by the Allies.

Group Army were officially part of the Nationalist forces under the command of the Shansi warlord Yen Hsi-shan, they were still known as the 8th Route Army. By 1943 the Communists were in control of nearly all of Shantung province and the 8th Route Army was in charge of northern Kiangsu province. The New 4th Army controlled all of central Kiangsu and most of the south of the province. They had also developed a large base which covered most of Hupei province and parts of southern Hunan. By 1944 the Communists were in control of 300,000 miles of territory inhabited by 90 million people.

The Communists were organized into three types of fighters with the regulars classed as A type troops. These were reasonably well equipped with rifles, light and heavy machine guns and mortars. B and C type troops were second-line fighters in smaller units with only a percentage having small arms. They were still inexperienced in large-formation fighting and lacked the skills to deploy and handle artillery and knew little of modern signal work. The regulars usually operated in bands of between 300 and 400, and only on rare occasions did they join together into larger formations. One commentator said of both the New 4th and 8th Route armies

A US-supplied 105mm field gun of the Chinese Army fires at Japanese positions in the town of Myitkina in northern Burma. The siege of the strategically important city by the Chinese began in May 1944 and ended with the defeat of the Japanese 33rd Division on 3 August. (Imperial War Museum, NYF 37156)



> This Army did not know how to handle artillery; it did not know how to handle an air corps; it knew little of modern signal corps work, mechanization or medical practice; its warriors could not manoeuvre a division in battle. Only one quality made it great – its fighting spirit.[17]

Although most of the Communist regulars were fighting the Japanese during the 1940s, an elite force of 50,000 men were facing the Nationalists. They were concentrated to the north of Sian in Shensi province, ready to protect the Communist capital at Yenan when necessary. There they were facing between 200,000 and 500,000 Nationalist troops who were blockading Yenan under Chiang Kai-shek's orders. Although the blockade stopped the Communists moving southwards out of Shensi province it did not stop them from preparing for the coming clash with the Nationalists. By 1944 the Communists had trained some 40,000 young men and women at Yenan as political officers. These men and women would become the political officers for the People's Liberation Army as it expanded after 1945.

In 1945 the Communists gave the strengths of the New 4th and 8th Route armies as totalling 910,000 men. According to communist figures.The New 4th had 135,000 men in 1941, but after the attack of the Nationalists on it during that year that number had reduced to 110,960 by 1942. In 1943 the army had regained some of its strength and stood at 125,892 men, rising to 293,982 by December 1944. The same report gave the strength of the 8th Route Army as 305,000 in 1941, rising to 340,000 by 1942. There was a slight dip in numbers in 1943 down to 339,000 and then their numbers fell again, to 320,800 by the spring of 1944. As the Japanese Army began to pull some of its troops out of Communist-controlled China in the latter part of the year, the numbers of the 8th Route Army rose dramatically, up to 550,835 by December 1944. As with all reports coming out of China at the time, these figures have to be viewed with caution. Everyone had an agenda when it came to reporting numbers of troops and even the US and British reports were sometimes contradictory. For instance US intelligence estimates of the size of the Communist forces were more conservative. Military intelligence reports claimed there were 475,000 Communist fighters in 1944, 346,000 of which were in the two field armies.

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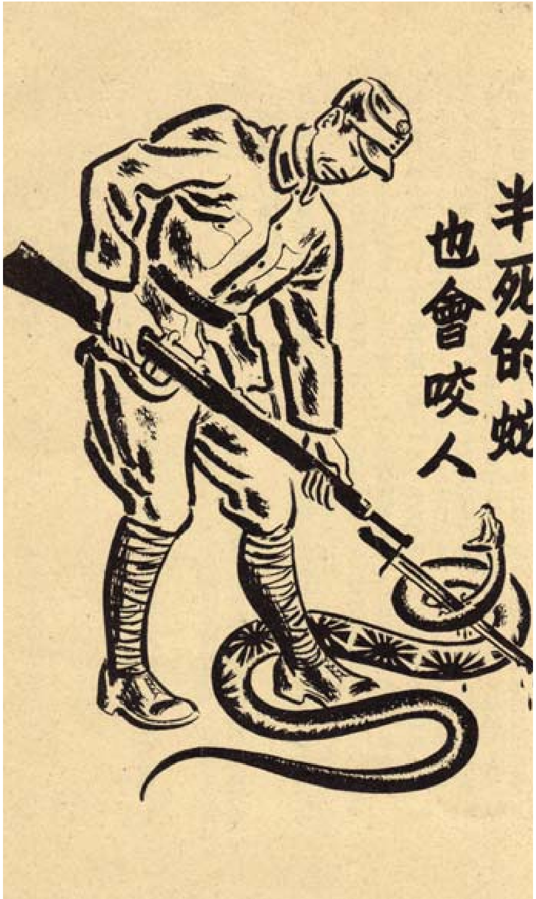
[17] Janusz Piekalkiewicz, *The Cavalry of World War 2* (1976).

The Communists' situation in Manchuria during the 1937–45 period is a more confused picture. However, the Japanese had more control of guerrilla activity here than in the rest of China. There were a reported seven guerrilla columns active against the Japanese and Manchukuoan armies. The included the 'Anti-Japanese League 5th Corps' in eastern Kirin province and the 'People's Revolutionary 3rd Corps' which was also active in Kirin. After the defeat of the anti-Japanese fighters in the early 1930s the Japanese kept a tight control on guerrilla activity in Manchuria. The Communists in Manchuria were seen by the Japanese as more of an irritant than a real threat to their control of the three provinces. With few weapons and no support, even from their fellow Communists in the rest of China, the Manchurian guerrillas' main aim was to survive until the Japanese were defeated. Instead of confronting the Japanese, they concentrated on building up their political organization in preparation for the post-war conflict with the Nationalists. In Manchurian towns and villages they established networks which would serve them well when they faced the Nationalist Army there between 1945 and 1948. They were helped in both their military and political work by a large number of Koreans who had crossed the border to be trained to 'liberate' their country post-1945.



This US propaganda leaflet from 1944–45 was dropped over the Burmese Front with the intention of inspiring their Chinese Allies while undermining Japanese morale. The soldier of the Nationalist Army bayonets the serpent of the Japanese Imperial Army. As the Chinese characters warn the Nationalist soldiers 'A half-dead snake can still bite!'

In July 1945 the US War Department undertook a detailed study of the number of field or regular Communist troops, local or second-line troops and militia in each war region. They estimated that the Communists had 50,000 regulars with 30,000 rifles in the Shensi, Kansu and Ningsia provinces. In the Shansi–Suiyuan war region they had 26,000 regulars, 5,000 local forces and 50,000 militia with only 15,000 rifles. In the Shansi–Chahar–Hopei war region they had 35,000 regulars, 29,000 local forces and 630,000 militia with a total of 21,000 rifles. In Shantung province regular forces were given as 50,000, and there were 25,000 local forces and 500,000 militia. In the Canton region the Communists had a small 3,000-strong field force armed with 2,000 rifles and on Hainan Island they had 5,000 regular fighters with only 3,000 rifles. Including

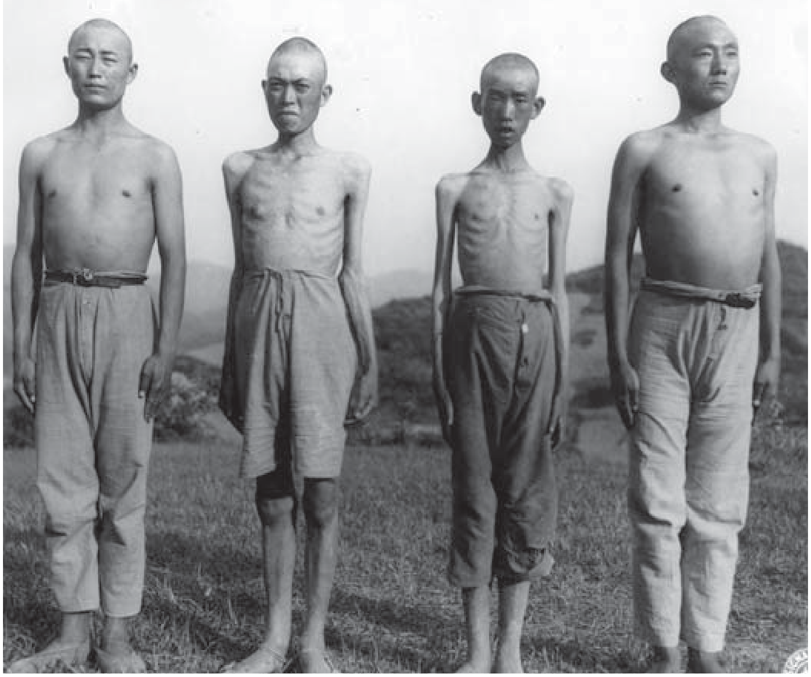
the New 4th Army and the 18th Group Army the totals for the whole of China were given as 346,000 regulars, 129,000 local or irregulars and 2,130,000 militia. Although the militia forces were quoted as over two million these were basically unarmed reserves for the regular and local forces.

A major issue for the Communists throughout the war was the shortage of armaments, with small arms and heavier weaponry having to be captured from the enemy. They could often rely on capturing rifles from puppet troops, but as the Japanese knew this happened, they strictly rationed the number of bullets issued to soldiers. They also issued their puppet troops with the oldest rifles possible which meant that the Communists often had to repair any they captured. A shortage of ammunition meant that the Communists could rarely allow target practice for the rifles and machine guns they did have.The Communists received only one delivery of arms direct from the Chungking government after 1940. This tiny arms shipment was made up 120 light machine guns and six anti-tank guns which had originally been sent by the Soviet Union as part of the arms shipments to the Nationalists between 1937 and 1941. It can be assumed that this token arms shipment was sent by the Nationalists at the insistence of the Soviets.

Opposite page
The 19th Nationalist Division is seen on parade in Yunnan province in 1944 dressed in French Adrian helmets. They are armed with Belgian Mauser Type 30 short rifles and the machine gunners have FN Mle-30 heavy automatic rifles. Even this late in the war Chinese troops were still armed with various types of rifle and other small arms.

JAPANESE ANTI-GUERRILLA OPERATIONS 1941–43

During the early 1940s the Japanese in China were mainly concerned with controlling rather than destroying the Nationalist and Communist resistance. Operations between 1941 and 1943 were often large-scale raids to disrupt enemy activity and keep the lines of communication open between their garrisons. Large numbers of Japanese were used in these operations and increasingly they were joined by puppet Chinese troops. Although the operations were highly destructive, especially to the civilian population, they brought them no nearer to defeating the enemy. In one anti-guerrilla operation to the west of the Pinghan Railway in 1941 the Japanese used a total of 70,000 troops supported by 30,000 Nanking puppet troops. This long-term operation lasted from August to October 1941 but, as was often the case, merely dispersed the guerrillas. This was followed by a 'mopping-up operation', launched on 3 November in the Yimeng Mountains in Shantung province and involving 50,000 troops.



Two replacements belonging to the 1st Battalion, 261st Regiment, 87th Division of the 71st Nationalist Army stand between two veterans at their training camp in May 1945. The wretched condition of the new arrivals is typical and they have probably marched hundreds of miles to reach their training camp. Those who survived the long march to the camp were often rejected by the US instructors because they were unfit for service.

The Communists had controlled a small area on the coastline of Shantung province but had been pushed out of the region by the Japanese in 1939. They had taken shelter in the mountainous region in the centre of the province, until the Japanese forced them out in this operation.

From January to July 1942 there were a total of six offensives, involving more than 15,000 Japanese troops. During the year most anti-guerrilla operations were directed against the Communists in east and central Hopei province. They used 40,000 troops in the east Hopei operation which lasted from April to May, and then 50,000 troops were employed in central Hopei in the '1 May mopping-up operation', commanded by General Yasuju Okamura, which lasted until 30 June. Altogether there were nine anti-guerrilla operations launched by the Japanese in 1942, each using an average of 20,000 men.

In 1943 the Japanese launched an 'autumn mopping-up operation' which lasted from 20 September until 3 November. The Japanese employed a total of 30,000 troops against the Hopei–Shantung–Honan Communist base area. Although Communist losses were heavy, Japanese losses were also estimated at 11,000 men. By 1944 the Japanese realized that no matter how many times they pushed the Communists out of an area they would resurface again within weeks. Even when they killed thousands of enemy fighters and civilians this only created hatred which brought more recruits to the Communist fold. Their strategic plans now turned to the Nationalists who they believed were weak enough to be defeated by one final offensive during 1944. If they were successful in destroying the Nationalist Regular Army in the south the Japanese could then employ overwhelming resources in the north and central China against the Communists.

THE JAPANESE ARMY IN CHINA 1944

In January 1944 the Japanese forces in China were – on paper – little changed since 1941. However, many of the units in China had been depleted in both men and weaponry as troops were sent to fight in the Pacific Theatre. The North China Area Army had under its direct command two divisions, one division fewer than in 1941 and had lost the 27th and 35th divisions. It had gained the 63rd Infantry Division but had also lost a mixed brigade from its order of battle. The 1st Army had kept its three-divisional strength as had the 12th Army, although the latter had lost two brigades since 1941. The Mongolia Garrison Army had been substantially strengthened with the addition of the 3rd Armoured Division in anticipation of attacks from the Mongolian People's Republic. This unit was to participate in the Ichi-Go offensive later in the year and was also to lose one of its three regiments to the Pacific theatre in June. In the northern part of central China above the Yangtze River, the 11th Army had gone from six infantry divisions in 1941 to eight in 1944 while losing only one brigade from its strength. The 13th Army which controlled the region to the south of the Yangtze River had, at least on paper, doubled in size. In 1941 it had three infantry divisions but had been reinforced by a further three divisions by 1944. In southern China the 23rd Army had been weakened slightly since 1941, losing one of its two divisions, but had gained two mixed brigades to supplement the one it already had.

In October 1944 the 20th Army, with the 27th, 64th, 68th and 116th infantry divisions, was transferred to central China from the Kwangtung Army. This additional army was needed to cover the area left un-garrisoned by Japanese forces advancing southwards during the Ichi-Go Offensive.

Japan's Ichi-Go Offensive 1944–45

In April 1944 the Japanese Imperial Army in China launched a massive offensive with two main objectives. First, it intended to totally disrupt the war effort of the Nationalist government by stealing or destroying crops from the rice-growing region of central China, and by targeting troops of the Chinese Central Army to reduce the number of reliable units available to Chiang Kai-shek. The Japanese knew that if they could defeat the more reliable troops the less reliable regional and provincial formations would collapse. Second, it planned to destroy the US air bases of the 14th Air Corps which were being built in south and eastern China. These US bases were intended to be used to bomb targets on the Japanese mainland with the new B-29 heavy bombers. Japanese forces earmarked for the offensive

were substantial: 17 divisions totalling 400,000 men, 800 tanks and 1,500 artillery pieces. To transport this massive force the Japanese collected together 12,000 motor vehicles and 70,000 horses and mules. Although they would be faced by hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops during their advance, only approximately 390,000 Chinese troops were in reliable divisions. The offensive was divided into two parts, with Operation *Ko-go* concentrating on the Peking–Wuhan railway in Honan province. In a three-week campaign in May, 150,000 Japanese troops moved south from Chengchow and north from the Hankow region and joined forces. This meant that the Nationalist-held salient in Honan province was now cut off from the rest of Free China.

Meanwhile the much-larger Operation *To-go* with 350,000 troops had been launched southwards from its starting point on the Yangtze River. The first city on its line of advance was Changsha, which had successfully resisted Japanese attacks in 1939 and 1941. In command of the city's defences was General Hsueh Yueh, 'The Tiger of Changsha', who had led his men in the 1939 and 1941 battles. Hsueh was a 'maverick' Nationalist general who was out of favour with Chiang Kai-shek and only held on to his command because of his status as a war hero. Hsueh had not received any new men or equipment since his last victory in 1941, but was determined to throw back the Japanese for a third time. As one commentator reportedly said, his troops may have been the same ones who had previously defeated the Japanese, but they were now 'three years older' and 'three years hungrier', and their weapons were 'three years more worn'. Although his 12,000 troops fought hard this time the odds were against them, their morale was affected by war-weariness and the city fell on 18 June. The Japanese then continued their advance through Hunan with the next major Chinese defences at the city of Hengyang in the south of the province. This city was defended by Major-General Fang Hsien-chueh's 15,000-strong 10th Army, with supporting air strikes from the bombers of the 14th Air Force. The city held out valiantly for 47 days and there was talk in the Nationalist high command of exploiting their efforts by launching a counter-attack against the Japanese. However, although Nationalist troops were available on paper in reality very few of them were in any condition to fight. Hengyang fell on 8 August and the Japanese went on to destroy the 27th Army Group as they advanced.

By September the Japanese, now moving south-westwards, had broken through the Chuanhsien defence line and were heading into Kwangsi province. As they advanced, the Japanese destroyed several air bases

Opposite page
A mortar crew of the Chinese Army fire their M1 81mm mortar in defence of the US 14th Air Force base at Chihchiang, south-east of Chungking in May 1945. The important bomber base had been coming under Japanese attack for several months as they tried to stop the US bombers from operating against Japan from it. By this stage of the war in China the Japanese were withdrawing from outlying garrisons as their impending defeat became clearer.

The Dixie Mission

As the war was going so badly for the Nationalists in 1944 the US wanted to utilize the Communists' military force in the war effort. They suggested to Chiang Kai-shek that some of their advisors should visit Yenan to see if anything could be done. Chiang very reluctantly agreed to a US observer group visiting Mao Tse-tung's headquarters and in July 1944 a Colonel David Barrett and 17 military observers arrived there. This mission's job was to start talks with the Communists about helping downed US pilots who had parachuted into Red Army-held territory, and to gather information. In November 1944, US special envoy Patrick Hurley also visited Yenan to draw up an agreement with Mao. This five-point agreement called for a coalition government, a unified Chinese army, and the legalization of the Communist Party. It also called for the civil rights of the Communists to be respected and for their representation on the military council. Chiang rejected the agreement but instead called for the Communist acceptance of Sun Yat-sen's three principles and the turning over of their troops for service in the Nationalist Army. In return he promised to accept some limited civil rights, legal status and seats on the military council. Despite the collapse of this proposal, continued US frustration at the Nationalist Army's war effort led to further feelers being put out to the Communists.

In December 1944, General Wedemeyer proposed a new military alliance between the USA and the Communists. In the aftermath of the Japanese Ichigo offensive he suggested that three Communist 'elite' regiments, totalling 5,000 men, be sent to aid the Nationalists. These regiments, sent from the Communists' Yenan headquarters, would be armed and equipped by the US and then sent into action under an American commanding officer aided by ten liaison officers. Not surprisingly Chiang Kai-shek rejected the plan but used the excuse that the regiments would not be welcome in the Nationalist territories in southern China where they were to operate. After the plan was rejected, further schemes were suggested which included the landing of 4,000–5,000 US paratroopers in Yenan to help the Communists attack Japanese installations. Another plan involved the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS) training 25,000 Communist guerrillas. This plan also called for the arming of up to 100,000 people's militia, predominately with special one-shot pistols which were designed for use by resistance fighters and mainly intended for assassinations behind enemy lines. None of these US schemes were to get off the ground however, as by early 1945 the threat of a post-war civil conflict was becoming more real. The pro-Nationalists amongst the US military did not want to be responsible for arming the Communists who would then turn their guns against their Allies.

including one at Hengyang, but the B-29 air field at Chengtu in Szechwan province remained operational. Imperial Army units then divided into two columns with one heading for the city of Kweilin, and the second advancing towards Luchow in eastern Kwangsi province. Although the Nationalists concentrated all their available troops to defend the two cities, most divisions had been reduced to regimental or even battalion strength. Both cities fell in November: Kweilin on the 10th and Luchow on the 11th. The Japanese advance now moved north-westwards in Kweichow province with the aim of reaching more US and Chinese air bases.

The Nationalists rushed reinforcements to Kweichow as the capital Chungking appeared to be under threat. Some of these Chinese troops were hastily flown by US planes from their bases in north-west China.

Specially selected Nationalist troops being trained in guerrilla tactics by the Sino-American Co-operative Organization 'SACO' in September 1945. From 1942 until 1945 the US Navy trained Chinese soldiers in various military skills at several locations in China. These recruits have been issued with M1 carbines, a type of US weapon not seen in service with the regular Nationalist Army before 1946.

Regardless, the Japanese advance continued through Kweichow, with the city of Tushan falling on 8 December. For various reasons the Japanese advance now stalled and when they came up against a new defence line north-west of Tushan they stopped advancing entirely. Firstly, the Japanese were reluctant to advance into Szechwan province where they would have to spend the winter, and secondly the war in the Pacific was going badly for the Japanese and their leaders were already considering withdrawing from outlying regions of China. The offensive was costly for the Japanese but for the Chinese it was a disaster with between 300,000 and 500,000 troops and 200,000 civilians killed. Materially it was particularly costly for the Nationalist Army with some analysts claiming that the equipment for an entire 40 divisions was lost during the offensive.

JAPAN'S WAR IN CHINA 1945

By early 1945 the war elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific was going against the Japanese and final defeat was inevitable. However in China the stalemate between the Japanese occupiers and the Nationalists and Communists continued much as it had since 1941. The Japanese were no longer capable of defeating the Nationalists, the Chinese Army and

The Chinese General Ho Ying-chin accepts the surrender of all Japanese Imperial forces in China on 9 September 1945 on behalf of Chiang Kai-shek. Acting on behalf of the Imperial government is General Yasuji Okamura who agreed to the laying down of arms by 1,283,240 Japanese in China.

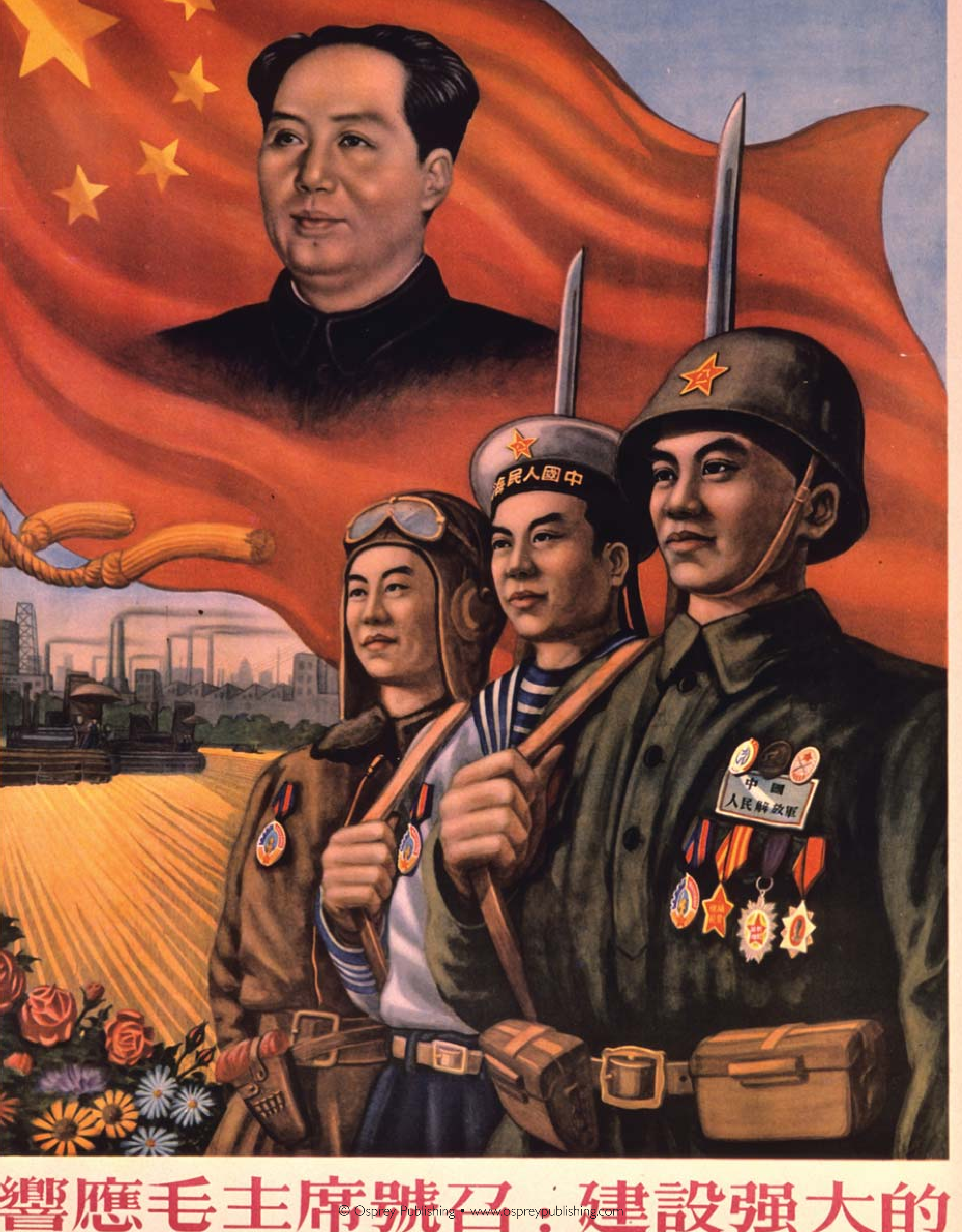
Communist guerrillas. But at the same time the Chinese forces could not hope to throw the Japanese out of China, at least in the short term.

Japanese Imperial Army units launched their final major offensive in China during April and May with the 20th Army aiming to capture a major US air base. The Chihchiang offensive was named after the US air base which was the intended target of the operation. It was launched from territory recently captured by the Japanese during the Ichi-Go offensive. The Japanese faced opposition from a strong four-division Nationalist force which eventually managed to halt the offensive in early May. Throughout the offensive the Chinese defenders were constantly reinforced. For once the Chinese had managed to stop a Japanese attack, but they had had to use overwhelming numbers of troops to accomplish this.

The Japanese were now ready to make a withdrawal from all outlying regions of southern and south-central China. Plans were drawn up for the 11th, 20th and 23rd armies to withdraw from the south and concentrate in the Wuhan area with the reinforced 34th Army. Other forces would concentrate in the Canton region and in north China where the main strength of the Japanese Army was situated. During the spring and late summer of 1945 the withdrawal operation continued with the Japanese fighting any Nationalist units that tried to stop them. This strategic withdrawal was still under way in early August when the Kwangtung Army in Manchuria was struck by the long-feared attack from their Soviet neighbours to the north. On 9 August, the Soviet Army launched a massive offensive into Manchuria even though Japan and the Soviet Union had previously signed a non-aggression pact. The force of 1,500,000 men in 89 divisions, with 3,704 modern tanks, 1,852 self propelled guns and 3,700 aircraft, swept the Kwangtung Army aside. Many of the Soviet troops were battle-hardened veterans of the fighting in Europe released by the defeat of Nazi Germany a few months before.

Although the Japanese Kwangtung Army still had 600,000 men in 25 divisions and six brigades, its 1,215 armoured vehicles were nearly all obsolete as were its 6,700 artillery pieces. The air force was made up of obsolete fighters and adapted trainers dating back to the early 1930s. Also involved was the 200,000-strong Manchukuoan Army in eight divisions and seven cavalry units. During the 11-day lightning campaign the Japanese Army in north China managed to reinforce the Kwangtung Army with six divisions and six brigades of the 6th Army. However, these troops only added to the hundreds of thousands of prisoners-of-war that the Soviet Army took at the conclusion of their offensive.

The defeat in Manchuria and the dropping of the two nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki finally convinced the Japanese to surrender on 2 September. This was followed on 9 September by the formal surrender of all Japanese forces in China by Japanese General Yasuji Okamura. This left the Japanese with a total of 1,250,000 troops in north, central and southern China. There were also 1,750,000 Japanese civilians living in China, who had to be dealt with by the Nationalist government. The majority of the 900,000 soldiers of the Kwangtung Army were already prisoners of the Soviet Army. Over the next few months the majority of the Japanese soldiers and civilians in China were repatriated back to Japan. After such a bitter conflict the handover of power by the Japanese to the Nationalists and Communists went fairly smoothly. Some Japanese technical officers and men were, however, to remain in China, whether voluntarily or through coercion, to fight in the now-inevitable civil war.


中國人民海
中國
人民解放軍
響應毛主席號召：建設強大的

CHAPTER 7

RED VICTORY

1946–49

The end of the Second World War in August 1945 may have brought peace of a kind to Europe but Asia was in turmoil. In China the only certainty was that a renewed civil war was bound to break out between the Nationalist government and the Communists. Japan's defeat would re-ignite the struggle between the Nationalists and Communists that had been more or less in limbo since August 1937. During the struggle against the Japanese, there had always been conflict when Communists met Nationalists and only the presence of the Imperial Army had stopped these escalating. Throughout the Japanese occupation of most of China, a parallel conflict had been fought between

Opposite page
This typical Communist poster issued after the victory of the People's Liberation Army in the Civil War of 1946–49 extols the new state's armed forces. Alongside the airman, sailor and soldier, Mao Tse-tung, leader of the People's Republic, looks into the distance at what was hoped to be a new dawn for China.

We hope Gen. Marshall will
reconcile civil strife in
the Northeast in the spirit
of the Jan. 10th Truce Agree-
ment. 要求馬歇尔将軍本一月十日
協定的精神公平調処東北内战！

Two Communist soldiers read a wall poster proclaiming the truce agreement of 10 January 1946 between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung. Neither leader had any real intention of honouring the truce and only went along with the US-brokered deal to play for time. Full-scale fighting between the Nationalists and Communists began in April and although a ceasefire was arranged in June, the Chinese Civil War was underway.

regular and irregular units of the Nationalist Army and Communist guerrillas.

The Communists had spent the 1930s and early 1940s winning the hearts and minds of the populations under their control. They knew that they would need a firm base from which to launch their war of liberation to take over all of China and defeat the Nationalists. At the same time the Nationalists had been planning, along with their US advisors, to take back control of the parts of China lost during the Japanese occupation. Chiang Kai-shek was less interested in winning over the Chinese people who had been indoctrinated by the Communists between 1937 and 1945. He saw military rather than political solutions to the problem and believed that the people would be won over to the Nationalist cause once the Communists had been defeated and peace restored.

On 14 August 1945, the 1,250,000 Japanese troops in China and the 900,000 in Manchuria agreed to an unconditional surrender. On the same day the Nationalist government signed agreements with both the Soviet Union and the United States. These agreements accepted both the temporary occupation of Manchuria by the Soviet Union and temporary control of Shanghai and several other strategic cities by the US Army and Navy. As such 53,000 US Marines were immediately despatched to Peking and Tientsin and 110,000 Nationalist troops were airlifted by the USAF to north and north-eastern China. Meanwhile six divisions of the Nationalist 13th and 52nd armies were transported by a US amphibious force to Manchuria. In an effort to allow the Chinese Communists to gain ground, the Soviet Army stopped the Nationalists from landing at three ports. By the time they were able to land at Chinhuangtao and move into the Manchurian countryside the Communists had already concentrated their forces there.

General Douglas MacArthur also sent orders to Tokyo that Japanese troops in China should surrender to the Nationalists while those in Manchuria should hand over their arms to the Soviet troops. Japanese troops were also ordered by Chiang Kai-shek to keep their military supplies, maintain order and defend themselves against Chinese Communist attack. Communist units acting on their own initiative did attack Japanese garrisons on over 100 occasions during September. The Nationalists successfully took control of the majority of cities in eastern, south and central China but the countryside around them was often in Communist hands. Communist troops managed to take control of 59 cities, mostly in the north and in Manchuria.

THE NATIONALIST AND COMMUNIST ARMIES IN 1945

During the latter half of 1944 and the spring of 1945 it was decided to reduce and rationalize the oversized and inefficient Nationalist Army. This led to the removal of 1,410 incomplete and poorly armed and trained units and 1,100,000 men from the Nationalist roll-call. Some of the redundant soldiers were simply re-assigned to front-line units, which increased the Nationalist Army in the field by approximately 150,000 men.

However, at the end of the world conflict in August 1945 the Nationalist Army still had a paper strength of three million men. Such a large army was financially unsustainable for the Chinese economy after years of war, and a further reduction to 2,400,000 men was necessary. Although Chiang Kai-shek wanted to retain as many troops as possible for the coming civil war he realized that many of the troops on the pay-roll were not really value for money. Out of the new total an estimated 1,700,000 could be regarded as front-line troops, and many of these were in reality a poorly trained and armed rabble. The aim was to produce a smaller and better-armed Nationalist Army with a more consistent

standard of training, equipment and weaponry. Promises by the US to equip and partly train a 39-division core of the new Nationalist Army had been more or less completed by the winter of 1945–46. By late 1945 the US training programme had given 13 weeks' instruction to 11 divisions and had begun training another 22 divisions. Some civilians who came across the US-trained soldiers were so impressed by them that they were convinced that they were not Chinese at all!

Even with the input from the America, the improvement in part of the army did not compensate for the majority of the units which were still poor by Western standards. The five divisions of the New 1st and New 6th armies which had been trained at Ramgarh in India were battle hardened after service in Burma from 1944–45, and their soldiers were superior in every way to the vast majority of Nationalist troops in 1945, however they were soon adversely affected by serving alongside other Nationalist divisions.

In 1945 the regular Communist forces stood at about 300,000 men with only 50 per cent of these having firearms. This small force could, however, be expanded easily using the personnel from the many second-line and militia units. There were only about 600 pieces of artillery in the Communist Army and most of these were obsolete or ex-Japanese with little available ammunition. Supporting the regular army was a 700,000-strong militia force or Ming Ping, who were armed with homemade firearms and primitive spears. They did receive firearms training and could easily be promoted to the regular army when weapons became available. A third part of the Communist military forces was made up of the numerous guerrilla groups spread throughout China. The biggest concentrations of guerrillas were in Shantung province and on the island of Hainan. Other groups operated in southern China in the Nationalist strongholds of Kwangtung and Kwangsi provinces. Again these irregular troops could be absorbed into the regular Communist Army when necessary.

Weaponry in the Civil War

During the Civil War the Nationalists were armed with a mixture of small arms with ex-Japanese, US-supplied and pre-1945 weapons used. Throughout the four years of the war they continued to use many of the rifles, sub-machine guns and machine guns left over from the 1937–45 period. As the war progressed they received more and more US weapons, such as the P-17 rifle, the M-2 carbine, the Johnson semi-automatic rifle and the M-3 'Grease Gun' sub-machine gun. However, Mauser rifles in 7.92mm calibre – originally imported from every possible producing nation in the 1930s – were still the main rifle in Nationalist forces. Machine guns were a mixture of modern Bren and ZB-26 light machine guns and home-produced Type 24 copies of the old water-cooled machine gun. Artillery was made up of US-supplied 75mm, 105mm and 155mm field guns which were still in first-line service with the United States Army in 1945 and older ex-Japanese types. Japanese medium and heavy artillery pieces captured in 1945 were still in service along with a few pre-1945 guns from Germany and other European nations. The Nationalists had a large number and a variety of types of armoured vehicles in service during the civil war but they were often poorly used by the army.

Nationalist tanks included US-supplied M3A3 and M5 Stuart light tanks and about 300 ex-Japanese light and medium tanks. Other types in service included the pre-1945 Nationalist Army's Soviet-supplied T-26 light tank which also saw service with the Communists. Some T-26s even survived the Civil War and were shipped to Taiwan when the Nationalists withdrew from the mainland in 1949. According to some sources the three organized armoured regiments had a mixture of armoured vehicles with the 1st Regiment having mainly army-surplus M3A3 light tanks and some

Opposite page
A 12-year-old boy soldier of the Nationalist Army is photographed at the docks in 1946 while waiting to be transported with his unit to Manchuria. Chiang Kai-shek sent some of his best divisions to establish Nationalist control of the five provinces of Manchuria.

A column of Nationalist troops marched into Mukden in March 1946 after the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from the city. Worryingly for the Nationalist command, only about half of these soldiers are armed but the rest would presumably be issued with rifles when they reach their barracks.

Opposite page
A bodyguard unit of the People's Liberation Army are pictured in the Communist party headquarters at Yenan in Shensi province in 1947. The men are wearing newly issued uniforms with the red star badge prominent on the front of their Mao caps. During the Civil War the vast majority of Communist troops wore similar uniforms to the Nationalists but with new insignia added.

T-26s. The 2nd Regiment was equipped with T-26s and even a handful of Italian CV-33/35 tankettes which were already obsolete when they were supplied in the mid-1930s. Finally the 3rd Regiment, which was based in Peking, had predominately captured Japanese Type 95 and Type 97 tanks. Because of the poor serviceability of these worn-out tanks they were never used in battle and were captured by the PLA when they took the city in January 1949. Chiang Kai-shek's adopted son Chiang Ching-kuo was in command of a brigade of M5 Stuarts which took part in the decisive Huai-Hai Campaign in 1948–49. The main types of armoured car in service with the Nationalists were locally produced in government workshops. Built on truck chassis they had metal plate added and were armed usually with machine guns or light cannon. At least four models of these improvised armoured cars were manufactured and several hundred were in service with many ending up in Communist hands by 1949. Other types in service included the usual handful of survivors from the pre-1937 army as well as White Scout cars supplied by the USA in the early 1940s.

During the course of the Civil War a number of attempts were made by the desperate Nationalists to purchase more armoured vehicles. These included an order in 1949 for 200 war-surplus M6 Staghound armoured cars and 200 Daimler scout cars from the UK which were due to be scrapped. Another deal in 1949 involved the purchase of 85 unarmed M4 Sherman medium tanks from British Army surplus stocks also. This private venture would have involved shipping the 'scrap' tanks from Britain to the USA for re-fitting and then onto China. As far as is known, none of the British armoured vehicles reached China before the end of the Civil War, but some may well have found themselves in Taiwan after 1950.

In 1949 the Communists claimed to have received 300,000 rifles and 4,800 machine guns from the Soviets in August 1945, plus heavier equipment including 2,300 trucks, 1,200 artillery pieces of various types and 360 ex-Japanese tanks. Other reports state that at first they were given only limited access to the huge stockpiles of arms captured by the Soviet Army in Manchuria. Arms that were transferred from the Soviet depots from late 1945 until mid-1947 were effectively rationed and sent to the Chinese in instalments. Whatever the truth, they did receive enough small arms to allow a vast expansion of their forces after 1945. This large windfall for the Communists allowed Lin Piao to rapidly expand his 20,000-strong army to 80,000 men. He also formed the first Communist Armoured Corps with 70 ex-Japanese tanks, mainly light vehicles which were often driven by their former Japanese crews.

This tinted photograph shows Mao Tse-tung and his bodyguard withdrawing from their Yenan base before the arrival of the advancing Nationalist troops in March 1947. The Nationalist taking of the enemy 'capital' was a huge propaganda boost for Chiang Kai-shek. However it was a hollow victory as Mao had had no intention of trying to hold on to his headquarters of 12 years, which had served its purpose.

New recruits for his army came from various sources and included ex-puppet troops, ex-prisoners of war and a number of Korean exiles. Communist arsenals had begun to produce some small arms during the 1937–45 period but these were insufficient to arm the large number of new volunteers for the PLA. Other arms came from captured Nationalist and Japanese sources but again these were too few to equip the Communists. During the first year of the civil war, when the Communists were on the defensive, nearly all the arms they used were ex-Japanese. From 1947 onwards, as the Communists won more victories, the vast majority of arms were captured from the Nationalists in battle. Other smaller quantities of Nationalist arms were sold to the Communists by corrupt government officials. Some were simply stolen from Nationalist arms depots or were captured in ambushes which were specifically aimed

Foreign Volunteers in the Civil War

Both the Nationalists and the Communists employed former Japanese soldiers in their armies during the Civil War. The Communists used former prisoners of war to operate their artillery and to crew captured tanks for them. They are also said to have used thousands of ex-Japanese soldiers to train new People's Liberation Army recruits. Japanese civilians trapped in China at the end of the war in August 1945 were employed in Communist arms factories where they passed on their skills to Chinese workers.

On the Nationalist side there was widespread use of former Japanese soldiers, including about 6,000 who served in the army of the 'Shansi warlord' Yen Hsi-shan. About 5,000 of these troops were organized into six railway guards units to keep the vital supply lines open between Yen's strongholds. Yen is also reported to have used former Japanese officers to train his troops after 1945 and to have employed about 200 engineers to construct fortifications for him. US pressure was brought to bear on Yen to release any Japanese fighting for him against their will but he ignored their messages. When Yen's capital Taiyuan fell in 1949, most of the Japanese 'volunteers' are said to have died in the fighting. If this is true then they could well have faced some of the several hundred of their former comrades who were reportedly fighting for the Communists in the same campaign. Other Japanese in Nationalist units included a force of approximately 1,500 men who fought in Suiyuan province.

Another important group of foreigners who fought with the Communists in the Civil War were between 30,000 and 40,000 Koreans. The Koreans were divided between those who had fought as part of the Communist guerrilla forces during the Second World War and a smaller group who had fought as guerrillas in Manchuria in the 1930s. These guerrillas had been forced to escape to the Soviet Union in 1940 and returned to fight in Manchuria in 1945. Those who joined the Chinese Communists in Yenan in 1939 were known as the Korean Volunteer Army (KVA). By 1945 the KVA had reached a strength of 1,000 men and were joined by many more Koreans. Another Korean formation the Yi Hong-Gwang Detachment (YHD) also fought alongside the volunteers of the KVA in the Chinese Civil War until 1948. They then returned to North Korea to help form the first units of the new republic's army.

Koreans fighting with the People's Liberation Army move down a mountain track during the winter of 1947. Thousands of Koreans fought for the Communists in China during the 1937–45 period and most remained to help their comrades defeat the Nationalists. Their homeland had been occupied by the Japanese since 1910 so they were happy to fight the Imperial Army alongside the Chinese. Most returned home in 1948 when the new People's Republic of North Korea formed its own army.

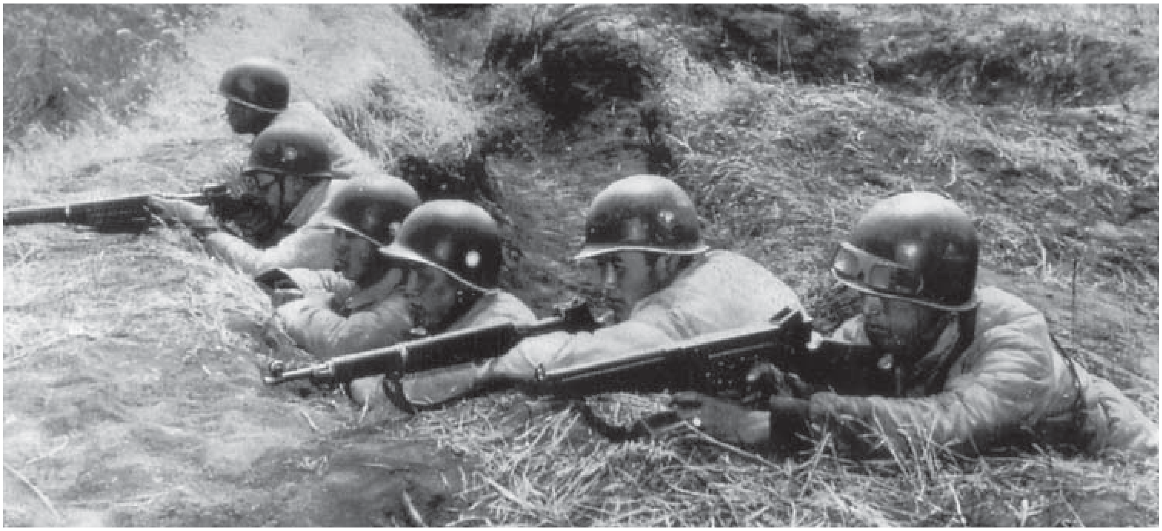
at obtaining arms. An arms embargo was placed on Nationalist China in 1946 by the US as attempts were made to force a peace agreement with the Communists. When this embargo was lifted in May 1947 large amounts of arms were immediately shipped to them. Unfortunately for the Nationalists the vast majority of these armaments soon ended up in the hands of the Communists. In May 1947 alone the Communists captured 20,000 Nationalist rifles, and in September 1948 they captured 50,000 rifles stored in ammunition dumps. During the last four months of 1948 the Nationalists re-captured 140,000 recently supplied US rifles and carbines but it was simply too late.

Military Aid for Nationalist China

The end of the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War led Chiang Kai-shek to believe that he could now expect unlimited aid from the United States. He assumed that the US would see him and his armed forces as a bulwark against Communist advances in Asia. Military aid from the United Nations was substantial but was never enough for the limitless needs of the Nationalists. Between 1945 and 1947 the UN sent China $685 million in financial aid with 70 per cent coming from the USA. At the same time the US Army sold military material left over from the Pacific Campaign worth $900 million to the Nationalists at the knock-down price of $175 million. Canada, another substantial donor to the Nationalists, gave $60 million in financial aid. With this aid the Nationalists – at least in theory – could purchase armaments and war-surplus equipment from European nations and other countries.

When the 1946 arms embargo was lifted the following year, a large proportion of the US financial aid was spent paying inflated prices for American weaponry. For instance an M2 carbine had an 'army surplus' price of $5.10 but was sold to China for $51 and a bazooka which sold on the surplus market for $3.65 was exported to the Nationalists for $162! Ammunition for the rifles had a surplus price of $4.58 per 1,000 rounds and was sold on to the Chinese for $85, while machine-gun ammunition with the same surplus price was sold at an even higher $95 per 1,000 rounds. In early 1949 a change of policy meant that ex-US Army armoured cars, which had been offered to the Nationalists at $32,000 each, were discounted to the bargain-basement price of $1,000 each.

In another example of strange US arms policy towards China, US General Wedermeyer suggested that large stocks of German 7.92mm rifle ammunition – which had been captured after the defeat of the Nazis in May 1945 – should be given free to the Nationalists. A ship containing 25,000 ex-German Army Mauser rifles was dispatched from a German port but was stopped en route by the US authorities. Unbelievably, given the developing Cold War, most of the rifle shipment ended up in Soviet hands and was then handed on to the East German Army.



These Nationalist troops defending a trench on the Sungari River front in 1947 are well equipped and armed by US aid. All the soldiers have ex-US Army M2 steel helmets and are armed with P-17 rifles and a Thompson sub-machine gun. On the left-hand side of their helmets they have the decal of a white sun on blue sky of the Nationalist Army.

In July 1946 the US government had imposed an embargo on military aid to Nationalist China. This was in retaliation for Chiang Kai-shek's effective blocking of their attempts to forge a peace deal with the Communists. At the time the Nationalists' successful Manchurian offensive meant that they were in no mood to listen to peace overtures. During the embargo the Nationalists relied heavily on their own arsenals to supply their troops with small arms. The monthly production of the 15 main government arsenals and other workshops and repair shops was, however, nowhere near sufficient to supply the army's needs. Production included 9,000 Chiang Kai-shek Mauser rifles, 550 Bren light machine guns and 250 Maxim water-cooled machine guns. Mortars which were an important weapon in both armies' armouries during the civil war were produced at the rate of 100 per month for 82mm models and 450 a month for the 60mm model. Ammunition for both types of mortar was produced at the rate of 50,000 shells for the 82mm and 85,000 a month for the 60mm.

THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY 1946–49

Until the winter of 1946–47, the field organization of the Communist Army was very loose with regiments having a strength of between two and four battalions. Average regimental strength was 1,500 men but this again varied from region to region and was often dependent on the availability

Winning 'hearts and minds', these off-duty Communist soldiers help to repair a road damaged in the fighting. Mao knew that half the battle in the civil war was convincing the civilian population that the Communists were the 'good guys'. Although public works like these may have helped win over the Chinese people at the end of the day most just wanted peace.

of armaments. The regiments were loosely organized into brigades with two or three being typical although the same units could also be formed into a division or a column. In the spring of 1947, the Communists – now known as the People's Liberation Army – started to try and regularize the system along the lines of their enemy's formations. Mobile field forces were organized into columns with each having three brigades or divisions. The size of the brigade/division depended on the local circumstances although a brigade was supposed to have about 4,000 men and a division 10,000 although 7,000 was the average. As more arms became available most regular brigades were expanded to divisional strength. The organization of the regional forces was also tightened up with volunteers formed into battalions of 300–400 and regiments of 1,000. These were often expanded into irregular-style brigades and divisions but were never as strong as the regular field force formations.

In May 1946 the Communists formed their rapidly expanding forces into six field armies which were named after the regions they were fighting in: the North-Eastern Field Army in Manchuria; the Shansi–Kansu–Ningsia Field Army; and the Shensi–Suiyuan Field Army; the Shansi–Chahar–Hopei Field Army; the Shansi–Hopei–Shantung–Honan Field Army; the East China Field Army. After the fall of Manchuria in 1949, the five existing armies were renamed the 1st–4th Field armies with the fifth called the North China Field Army. The Communists expanded their forces as quickly as possible, initially arming them with Japanese arms handed over by the Soviets, and then with captured Nationalist arms. In 1945 the total Communist forces were estimated to be about 300,000 men and by June 1946, had increased to a strength of 1,278,000 men and women. A year later it had further increased to 1,950,000 and by the following June it stood at 2,800,000 men.

Although many of the new soldiers came from amongst the ranks of the defeated Nationalist Army, others had to be recruited from civilian life. Despite the propaganda claims of the period, it was as difficult for the Communists to recruit soldiers during the first half of the Civil War as it was for the Nationalists. The PLA was not helped by their party's policy on land distribution – for the first time many peasants had land to cultivate, and they were reluctant to leave their newly acquired land to go off and fight with little reward apart from what they had already received from the Communists. Initially new recruits had to come from amongst the many refugees who needed employment after 1945. They also came from groups who were used to some kind of military service, such as bandits or the personal guards of landlords. They also came – especially in Manchuria – from the ranks of the former Manchukuoan 'puppet' army. These 200,000 or so unreliable former puppet troops were sometimes given a quick political re-education. The Communists knew that most ex-puppet soldiers saw the PLA as a means to fill their rice bowls. When times were hard for the Communists in 1946, many of these former puppet soldiers deserted to the Nationalists. Once the recruitment crisis was over the PLA began to get rid of any unreliable troops in a process of 'cleansing' or executions. It was estimated that during the war a total of 150,000 soldiers and officials who were considered 'undesirables' were executed by the PLA.

Communist soldiers take a meal break during the fighting for Manchuria in 1947 and are wearing the padded cotton uniforms worn by both sides during the civil war. As Nationalist troops went over to the Communists they only had to switch their white sun cap badge to a red star badge. These men do not even have a red star on their winter hats and may be Nationalists who have recently switched sides.

Many men who did volunteer to join the PLA were attracted by the security and discipline that military service offered. They had also been told by serving soldiers that the PLA generally looked after their men much better than the Nationalist Army. Most were better clothed and fed than their Nationalist counterparts and the sick and wounded were looked after. During 1948 the PLA was joined not just by the huge numbers of former Nationalist troops but also by formerly reluctant peasants who wanted to be on the winning side.

THE NATIONALIST ARMY 1946–49

In 1945 the Nationalist Army had a strength of approximately 2,500,000 men in 278 brigades of various sizes which were re-organized in 1946. The core of the army was the 39 infantry divisions that had been trained and equipped to one degree or another by the Allies. US equipment and weaponry had not reached all of these divisions by the end of the Second World War. Amongst the best units in the Nationalist Army were the veterans of the Burmese Campaign of 1943–45 with the New 1st and 6th armies forming an elite force. Besides this small, well-trained minority, the rest of the army was made up of a mixture of provincial troops, ex-puppet soldiers and paramilitary troops. Paramilitary troops totalled about 1,500,000 men and were mainly organized into the 'Peace Preservation Corps' (PPC). The Nationalist Army was to rely heavily during the Civil War on these second-line troops. In theory Peace Preservation Corps units were raised on a local basis to support the regular army. They were only armed with small arms and were intended to fill the ranks of the regular army. However, there was often hostility between the Nationalist Regular Army and the PPC. The regular army, especially in north China, was usually made up of soldiers from other regions of the country who often had little desire to defend

the province they had been posted to. Peace Preservation troops were, however, usually recruited locally and at least in the early days of the war wanted to defend their own province. Regular troops also had little regard for the men of the PPC they served alongside because they had little military training. It was agreed as part of the peace talks between the Nationalist government and the Communists in 1945 that the PPC would be restricted to 15,000 men per province. However, by the start of the Civil War there were an estimated 1,500,000 of them in service, although most were later absorbed into the regular army. Other second-line

A lone Nationalist sentry stands guard on the wall of a city in Chahar province in the winter of 1947. Even towards the end of the Civil War in 1948–49, Nationalist rule was fairly secure in some outlying provinces like Chahar. These last bastions of Nationalist control would be swept up later after the battles in the main theatres of Manchuria and central China were won.

forces included the railway and traffic police who were also armed with small arms. Both these forces were employed in keeping the lines of communication open between the Nationalist-held towns and villages. Because they were lightly armed they also became easy prey for the Communists who used them as a further source of weaponry.

A Nationalist-recruited village militia also existed but was largely unreliable and became a huge source of small arms for the Communists. Nationalist armies were organized into several corps, each with either two or three divisions depending often on local circumstances. Although each division was supposed to be 10,977 strong, few reached this level and the average was about 5,000 men. In a three-phase programme introduced in 1947 all divisions were supposed to be re-named re-organized brigades with three regiments per brigade. The former corps was re-designated as a re-organized division and retained the artillery and other support branches. In September 1948 the changes were reversed so that the divisions became corps again and the brigades were once again divisions. All these changes were often of little consequence because, in the confused situation of the Nationalist Army, they were never enacted.

During the Civil War the morale, performance and behaviour of the Nationalist Army and its men was constantly called into question. The poor behaviour of the Nationalist soldier during the war was blamed on the age-old problems of their poor treatment by the army. When soldiers were criticized for stealing from the population or demanding food without payment they said that it was the government's fault. They argued that the Chiang Kai-shek government did not pay them enough and they had no choice but to take from the civilian population. When asked whether they were not afraid of punishment they would simply say that the government could not do anything because they needed them to fight. The Chinese civilians' attitude to the behaviour of many of the Nationalist soldiers during the war is summed up by the

Nationalist militia armed with sharpened bamboo spears go through drill on a parade ground in the city of Tsinan in Shantung province in April 1948. Local Nationalist commanders sometimes raised large paramilitary forces like this during the Civil War but were unable to get the rifles to arm them from the central government. This was because Chiang Kai-shek did not want any potential rivals for power backed by a well-armed militia loyal to their commander rather than to the Nationalist government.

mother of a journalist from north-east China. He returned to his village after 18 years away in the war and commented on the poor state of the family house. His brother said that if the house was in a good condition then Nationalist troops would take it over as their billet. His mother said:

> When the Japanese were here, we waited for Chairman Chiang to come back and never did we think it would be like this. The Japanese at least did not enter houses and take things, but now it is much worse. They (Nationalist troops) come in at will to live in your house, or they take things and leave. This house is no longer our own. They curse the Communist Party, saying it makes communal property of everyone's homes, but they themselves are doing the same thing every day.[18]

Morale in the Nationalist Army was at a low level, especially after the first heavy defeats by the Communists in 1947. By October 1947 it was noted that even the formerly elite Nationalist divisions that had been trained in India from 1942–45 had lost morale. John F. Melby commented that:

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[18] Han Ch'l, *Ten Days in the Northeast* (1947).

> Where once they were the equal of any troops in the world, they now look and act much like any other Nationalist soldiers. Morale and self respect are gone through the corrosion of poor leadership, indifferent treatment and the gradual infiltration of their cadres with run-of-the-mill soldiers.[19]

This lack of morale always affected the soldiers' will to fight with various eyewitnesses testifying to this fact on every front. One journalist was ,however, surprised at a Nationalist unit's eagerness to go into action after they had arrived at the front in 1949. When he questioned the soldiers he was told that they were keen because their commander had promised them $20 each if they won the battle. The poor treatment of most Nationalist troops which had continued after 1945 did not help to create good soldiers. Even when better treated other weaknesses like the poor equipment and arming of some units affected the performance of the men. A US military attaché in attendance at a military parade of General Wang Yao-wu's 96th Army in Shantung province in June 1947 commented that by usual Chinese standards the soldiers seemed well fed and fairly well clothed. However, while praising the morale, toughness and discipline of the troops he did note that only about 50 per cent of them had rifles and that very few had steel helmets. If these were some of the better Nationalist soldiers in 1947, what does that indicate for the poorer troops?

Most problems in the Nationalist Army began with the increasing indifference of the officer class to their men and the war. Even when presented with opportunities to improve their men's performance only the most enlightened of the Nationalist officers took up the challenge. For instance the American Advisory Group in China offered to send a training team to train three divisions' worth of troops in Canton in 1948. They duly arrived at the training facility waiting for some troops to train but none of the agreed divisions ever turned up. Many of the higher-ranking officers were deeply divided, with four rival cliques in the Nationalist High Command vying for power even in the face of defeat in 1948–49. In many cases a Nationalist commander happily stood by when a rival's army was under attack, even when ordered to go to their aid. Their delight at the defeat of a rival general was of course short-sighted in the extreme, as eventually their own army would be targeted by the victorious Communists. Chiang Kai-shek himself was known for constantly countermanding his commanders' orders from his headquarters in

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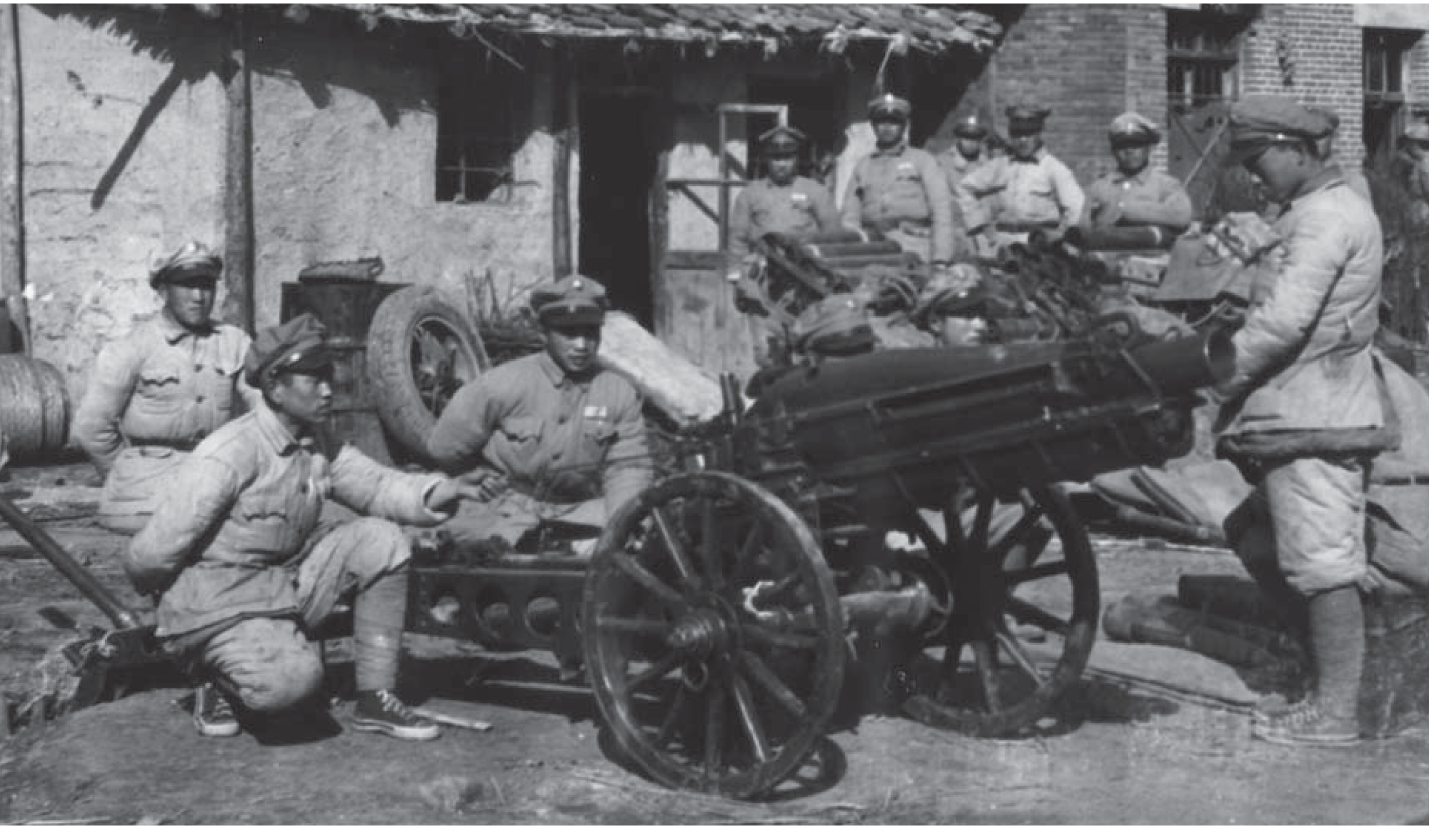
[19] John F. Melby, *The Mandate of Heaven – Record of a Civil War* (1968).



Nationalist artillerymen prepare to fire their US-supplied 75mm pack howitzer towards Communist lines. Stationed near Yingpan in November 1947, the men are dressed in a mixture of light cotton padded uniforms with the US-style peaked cap in common use after 1946. Most artillery supplied by the USA after 1945 was made up of this type of easily transportable gun rather than the heavier and more cumbersome 105 and 155mm howitzers.

Nanking. He would issue battle orders by looking at maps and base his decisions on intelligence that was either unreliable or out of date. Most instructions were issued after the daily 9pm military conference and by the time they arrived the following day the situation on the ground had usually changed. One poor officer was reported to have received instructions on the same day from his immediate superior officer, the chief of staff and finally from Chiang Kai-shek himself. The instructions were contradictory and unhelpful and when the officer implemented them to the best of his ability he lost the engagement. Chiang was notorious for bypassing the established chains of command and for only taking advice from so-called reliable generals. The first priority always seemed to be the loyalty of the general giving the advice rather than how military astute he was. Good officers were constantly frustrated by the behaviour of their fellow officers and with the general conduct of the war.

General Sun Li-jen, who was universally regarded as one of the best Nationalist commanders during the 1942–49 period, held informal

Opposite page
This heavily armed gunboat of the Nationalist Navy is seen patrolling off the coast of China in 1948. The largest ship in the navy during the Civil War was the ex-Royal Navy cruiser HMS *Aurora*. Most other vessels were gunboats and a total of 131 ex-US Navy landing craft of various types. Because the Nationalist Navy faced little opposition from the Communists who had no naval units, the evacuation to Taiwan by the Chiang Kai-shek government was unopposed.

discussions with US officials in 1948. During discussions he complained passionately about the decline of the Nationalist 38th Division and the army in general. Sun had ably commanded the division throughout the Burma Campaign from 1942–45. He was frustrated by the misuse of the New 1st Army – of which the 38th was a part – in the campaign in Manchuria. He said that the army commander General Tu Li-ming did not understand the training that the veterans of the 38th had received in India after 1942. They had been trained to be pro-active and to advance whenever possible against the enemy and had proved themselves in this role, especially during the 1944–45 fighting in Burma. Now he said they were being wasted in defensive positional warfare which sapped their morale – they were cold and starving, serving alongside the two other divisions of the New 1st, whose soldiers were 'untrained levies'. Unfortunately it was usually the case with the Nationalist Army that the mixing of good troops with poor troops did not improve the latter, but simply dragged the better soldiers down to the level of their comrades. Sun also commented on his fellow high-ranking officers, saying that there were a number of good generals in the Nationalist Army, but they were given no authority to act independently. He said that a good officer should be told 'what to do, but not how to do it' and that the Nationalist Army was plagued by constant day-to-day interference from the High Command in Nanking and in particular from Chiang Kai-shek. His comments on the two most important Nationalist military commanders in 1948 were particularly scathing. He said that both the chief of staff, General Ku Chu-tung, and the commander in chief, Yu Han-mon, were reportedly 'incompetent and corrupt'.

AIR AND NAVAL FORCES 1946–49

At the beginning of the Chinese Civil War the Nationalist Air Force – with a reported strength of 1,000 aircraft of all types – had complete air superiority over the Communists. The Nationalists were equipped with a mix of modern US-supplied aircraft like the P-51D Mustang and captured Japanese types like the KI-43 and KI-61 fighters. Bombers were again left-overs from the pre-1945 air force, including the US Mitchell bomber and the Soviet Tupolev SB-2 light bomber. By 1948 the Nationalist Air Force had been reduced to a fraction of its 1945 strength but had one medium and one heavy bomber group, with a mixture of aircraft:

29 US-supplied B24 Liberators, 23 B25 Mitchells, plus a handful of ex-Japanese planes like the KI-48 were also still in service. In addition the Nationalists had 36 Mosquito dive bombers which served in a composite group with four B25s. There were four fighter groups with a total of 139 P-51Ds and 29 older P47s and four of the obsolete P40s dating back to the pre-1941 era. The transport wing of the Nationalist Air Force, which was to prove vital in supplying isolated garrisons, had two groups with a total of 125 C46s and 45 C47 Dakotas. The performance of the Nationalist Air Force during the civil war was mixed with the combat units being poorly led and badly organized. Structures left in place by the US 14th Air Force in 1945, including a large store of spare parts, should have been sufficient to keep the Nationalist Air Force in the air. However, a shortage of skilled ground crew and the corruption of officers meant that at any time a large proportion of available aircraft were grounded. This being said the air force was in almost constant action throughout the war and its transport wing was instrumental in keeping many isolated Nationalist garrisons supplied. Bombers and fighters were reported to often fly too high to be effective against ground targets but there were too few of them to affect the outcome of the war in any case. By March 1949 the majority of Nationalist aircraft had been flown to Taiwan as Chiang Kai-shek began to build up the defences of his island bastion.

The Communists had been supplied by the Soviet Union with a small number of captured Japanese aircraft after 1945. These included at least one example of each of the Ki43, Ki44, Ki55, Ki61 and Ki84 fighters as well as Ki30 and Ki51 attack aircraft. They also received a few Ki48 medium bombers and various trainers and reconnaissance aircraft. Communist crews were trained at an aviation school in Yenan and were joined by 'volunteer' pilots from the Japanese Imperial Air Force. During the civil war a number of Nationalist pilots defected to the Communists with their aircraft and these were then sent back into action after the red star insignia had been added to their planes. In 1949 the Communists captured 1,400 Nationalist aviation technicians in Shanghai, and used them to open a flying school for the PLA.

Although the Nationalist Navy during the civil war was small it faced no opposition from the Communists who had no seagoing vessels at all. Its boats were limited to commandeered junks which were used to transport troops on the inland waterways. The Nationalist Navy had a few larger ships, including the cruiser *Chungking* which was the ex-HMS *Aurora*, and a few survivors of the 1937–45 period. Most of its vessels

A Nationalist squadron of US-supplied Mustang 51B fighters are parked off the runway as their pilots discuss tactics. These aircraft had first been supplied to the Nationalists during the Second World War and were then used in the Civil War. Some were flown by their pilots to Communist territory and helped form the People's Liberation Army Air Force.

were gunboats and other coastal patrol boats as well as 130 or so ex-US Navy landing craft. These vessels were very useful for moving Nationalist units up and down the Chinese coastline during the early days of the civil war. By 1949 the Nationalist Navy was divided into three squadrons with a total of three destroyers, six destroyer escorts, 34 various types of landing ships, and a number of gunboats and auxiliary ships. As with the other services, the Nationalist Navy had lost heart by early 1949 and it was no surprise when several ships, including the *Chungking*, went over to the Communists.

MANCHURIA 1946

After arriving in China in December 1945 the US government's Special Representative General George C. Marshall immediately began organizing a cease fire between the two factions. Both the Nationalists and Communists readily agreed to the cease fire of 13 January as neither side yet felt strong enough to defeat the other militarily. They agreed to keep

Former PLA officers who had defected to the Nationalist Army. There were limited attempts by the Nationalists to indoctrinate Communist prisoners into joining their side. In most cases it was Nationalist officers, often with their whole unit, which joined the People's Liberation Army as the Civil War progressed.

what territory they then held while further negotiations about a democratic solution to the dispute continued. These included the formation of a cabinet-style government involving all the political parties in China and the unification of Nationalist and Communist armies. The new unified army would have a strength of 60 divisions with ten being drawn from the Communists and the rest from the Nationalists. As political talks stalled, the Communists cooled on the idea of a unified army and Chiang suspected their motives. In truth neither side was committed to any agreement in the long term and both were preparing for war.

In January 1946 large numbers of Nationalist troops were flown into Manchuria by US aircraft or landed on the coast by their ships. Amongst the arrivals were 6,000 men of the 'elite' New 6th Army, veterans of the 1944–45 Burma campaign. By March General Marshall was confident enough in the progress of the peace talks that he returned to the USA to arrange an economic aid package to support the agreement. In his absence territorial disputes in Manchuria increasingly began to descend into all-out fighting. The situation in Manchuria was further complicated by the fact that the major cities were still occupied by Soviet troops. They had promised to leave by early 1946 but had delayed their withdrawal for diplomatic and economic reasons – Stalin was trying in vain to gain trading concessions from the Nationalists while his troops were shipping large amounts of valuable machinery from former Japanese factories.

The manoeuvring by the Communists and Nationalists had never stopped during the cease fire. The Nationalists had offered to limit the total number of their troops in Manchuria if they were allowed to reinforce their garrisons in Harbin and Changchun. Despite Communist protests the Nationalists had already reinforced their garrison in Soviet controlled Mukden in mid-January. Virtually simultaneously Chou En-lai stated that in effect full-scale hostilities had broken out in Manchuria. In the first half of January the Nationalists had also taken control of the city of Changchun and the port of Yingkou. The 6th and 13th Nationalist armies under the command of General Tu Lu-ming also took Liaochung near

Mukden in February. Soviet troops left Mukden in March and the Nationalists took over the city on the 12th. During the spring of 1946 the brinkmanship between the Communists and Nationalists in Manchuria continued. On 14 April the Soviet troops garrisoning Changchun withdrew from the city and by the next day 35,000 Communist troops, backed by 200 Japanese ex-POWs manning artillery and a few tanks, had moved in. They soon overwhelmed the Nationalist garrison of 14,000, which was mainly made up of poorly armed men of the Peace Preservation Corps. After two days' fighting the Nationalist commander General Ch'en Chi-ch'eng surrendered to the Communists.

By early May the Communists claimed to control 70 per cent of Manchuria and the Communist Party had set up local governments in all three of its provinces. The Nationalist Army then advanced into Manchuria in overwhelming numbers in May and easily pushed back the largely irregular Communist forces. On the 19th they took the city of Ssuping and were joined by 40,000 defecting Communist troops. These soldiers were nearly all ex-Manchukuoan soldiers, police and other former puppet officials, who had been recruited en masse in 1945 by the Communists, who doubtless now regretted their decision. By the 21st the Nationalists had advanced to within 35 miles of Communist-held Changchun which they re-captured two days later. As the see-saw fighting continued into June the Communists recaptured the city of Anshan and the port of Yingkow on the 4th. Chiang Kai-shek was now coming under increasing pressure from General Marshall to halt the Nationalist offensive while the US tried to negotiate with Mao Tse-tung.

Fearing withdrawal of US aid Chiang Kai-shek gave in to American threats on 6 June, ordering his troops in Manchuria to stop 'all advances, attacks and pursuits' for a 15-day truce. This decision forced on Chiang by the US virtually saved the Communists from annihilation in Manchuria. As the cease fire came into force Nationalist forces had been on the verge of capturing Harbin, the city where the Communists had established their headquarters. Despite the pleas of the Nationalist commander General Tu Yu-ming to be allowed to take the city, Chiang ordered that the cease fire be observed. Even though the cease fire had been forced on Chiang by the USA against his will, he could be highly satisfied with the results of the Nationalist offensive. His troops had inflicted heavy casualties on the poorly organized Communists who had failed to adapt their pre-1945 guerrilla tactics to conventional warfare.

After their defeats in the spring and summer of 1946 the Communists were in a poor state and were outnumbered three to one in Manchuria. The cease fire allowed the Communists to withdraw to the shelter of the north-east of Manchuria which bordered the Soviet Union, Mongolia and North Korea. Here they were safe from Nationalist attack and could begin rebuilding their forces with the help of Soviet and ex-Japanese army instructors. They could now re-train, re-equip and re-arm for the next stage in the fight for Manchuria. They also began to receive large amounts of captured Japanese arms including artillery and a few tanks from the Soviets. Some captured Japanese war materials had already been scrapped by the Soviet Army but from March onwards a substantial amount was handed over to the Communists. Despite their losses the Communists never doubted that they would eventually win the struggle for Manchuria. They had already learnt that, apart from the best US-trained Nationalist troops, who only amounted to a few divisions, their enemy was inferior to them man for man. At this stage in the Civil War it was the material superiority of the Nationalists in artillery and other heavy weaponry which was delivering their victories. By November the rejuvenated Communists in Manchuria were ready to re-start their military campaign. They launched an offensive across the frozen Sungari River to attack the Nationalists in their winter bases.

SHANTUNG 1946–48

Besides Manchuria, the province of Shantung was one of the most important fronts during the civil war and saw the majority of the fighting. As in Manchuria, the war in Shantung was fought along the main railways between the province's big cities. In 1946 when the main fighting began, the Nationalists controlled all of the major railways north–south and east–west through the province. Shantung was a Communist stronghold and the Nationalists wanted to take complete control of the province as a launching

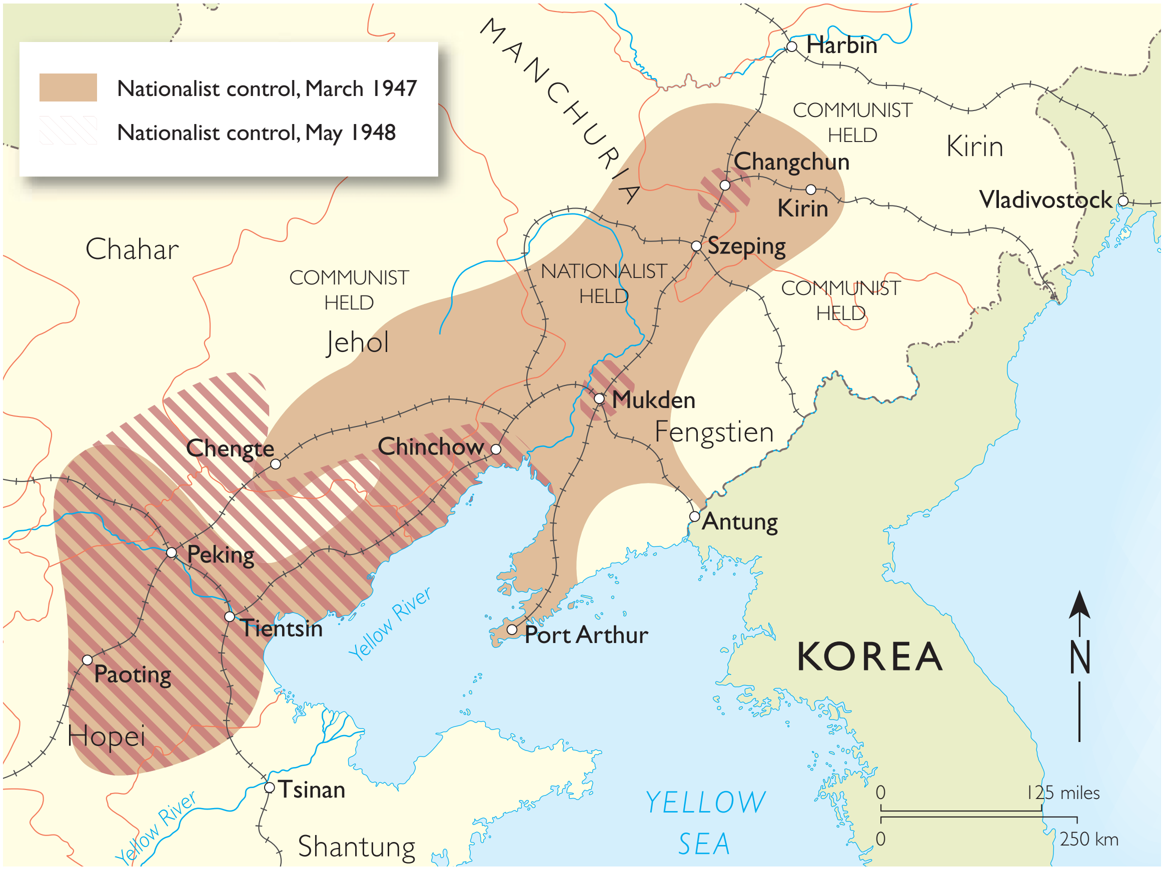
A Nationalist tank unit prepares to move out to support an offensive against Communist troops in 1948. The tanks are US-supplied M5 Stuarts which were sent to China in limited numbers after 1945. They were usually sent into action in the infantry support role and were not organized into larger mechanized units. Many were captured by the Communists and used to good effect by them alongside ex-Japanese tanks supplied by the Soviet Union.

point for further offensives. In the last days of 1946 the Nationalists, with a strong force of eight divisions of which 50 per cent were mechanized, moved against the six Communist divisions in the province. The Communists withdrew before the superior Nationalist forces, and on New Year's Day 1947 they attacked the enemy's flanks. These unrelenting night and day attacks were co-ordinated with guerrilla attacks against the Nationalist rear. Just when the victorious Communists were making progress towards their target, the city of Suchow, one of their generals defected. The defection of General Ho P'eng-chu sums up the disloyalty of many commanders during the civil war. During the Second World War, Ho had commanded the troops of the Nanking Puppet Army in Shantung. In 1945 he had been allowed to re-join the Nationalist Army with his troops; in January 1946 he had defected to the Communists only to switch sides again a year later!

In April 1947 the Nationalists made a renewed effort to finally destroy the Communists in Shantung. General Ku Chu-t'ung, with 400,000 troops in 60 divisions, launched a general offensive towards the Communist positions. The Communists withdrew into the mountains in central Shantung which were populated with their supporters and waited for the Nationalists to attack. In fighting reminiscent of the encirclement campaigns of the early 1930s, the Nationalists sent in divisions piecemeal against the Communists. These Nationalist attacks had the same result as they had in the 1930s ones and the Communists defeated most attempts to engage them. On 14 May two Nationalist divisions – the 25th and 74th – were surrounded at Mengliangku and wiped out. Despite their defeat, the Nationalists tried again six weeks later with 20 divisions. This time they were more successful and gained some ground against Chen Yi's troops. For the rest of the year a stalemate developed with neither side strong enough to finally defeat the other. Several Nationalist amphibious landings on the coast in late August brought limited successes, including the capture of the city of Chefoo. This was hailed as a great victory by the Nationalist press but in reality it brought them no nearer to defeating Chen.

After the heavy fighting of 1947 General Chen Yi and his Communist forces spent the winter training, resting and re-equipping. The remaining Communist troops in Shantung were sufficient to keep the Nationalists in check until he returned. In the spring of 1948 Chen returned with 400,000 men and plenty of artillery. He concentrated his force on the provincial capital of Tsinan while other forces kept the Nationalists trapped inside the other major cities. Tsinan had become a refuge for the survivors of all the battered Nationalist divisions that had been defeated in the previous campaigns. In March the Communists launched simultaneous attacks on several railway towns to try to further disrupt supplies to Tsinan. By May the 60,000-strong garrison was completely isolated and was being supplied by air by the totally overstretched Nationalist air force. In July PLA troops attacked the city of Yengchou and captured it on the 13th while a relief column sent from Tsinan was only 15 miles away. In September Chen Yi's army began to make its final move on Tsinan and surrounded it on all sides. Although some advisors said that the time was now right to evacuate the city Chiang Kai-shek would not accept this. On the night of the 14–15 September Chen Yi launched his attack on the city's defences. The fighting for Tsinan lasted for ten days. It was costly for the Communists as well as the Nationalists but the PLA captured 50,000 rifles when the city eventually fell. The fall of Tsinan left only the port of Tsingtao and one other town in Shantung in Nationalist hands, they had essentially lost this vital province to the Communists.

EXTENT OF COMMUNIST CONTROL, 1947 AND 1948


Nationalist control, March 1947
Nationalist control, May 1948
MANCHURIA
Harbin
COMMUNIST HELD
Kirin
Changchun
Kirin
Vladivostock
Szeping
Chahar
COMMUNIST HELD
NATIONALIST HELD
COMMUNIST HELD
Jehol
Mukden
Fengstien
Chengte
Chinchow
Antung
Peking
Tientsin
Yellow River
Port Arthur
KOREA
N
Paoting
Hopei
Tsinan
YELLOW SEA
0
125 miles
0
250 km
Yellow River
Shantung

MANCHURIA 1947

In January 1947 Lin Piao had about 300,000 troops in Manchuria which he knew was insufficient to defeat the Nationalists. Nevertheless he decided to launch a series of five offensives across the Sungari River against the Nationalists with the intention of wearing down the enemy's resolve. The first offensive, undertaken by 60,000 men, was launched on 6 January and was aimed at the cities of Changchun and Kirin. This first offensive was really a large-scale raid which succeeded in disrupting Nationalist garrisons and cutting the power supply to the capital Changchun. On this occasion the Nationalists reacted well to the Communist attack and pushed them back in several sectors. Undaunted, the Communists launched a second offensive on 16 February, towards the north-west of Changchun. Again they threatened the power supply to the city and heavy fighting took place around the city of Kirin. This time the Communists

People's Liberation Army soldiers fire from their trenches using a variety of small arms including captured Japanese rifles. They also have ex-Nationalist ZB-26 light machine guns and US Thompson sub-machine guns. The Communists relied heavily on captured weapons and equipment, much of it taken from the Nationalists para -military troops of the Peace Preservation Corps.

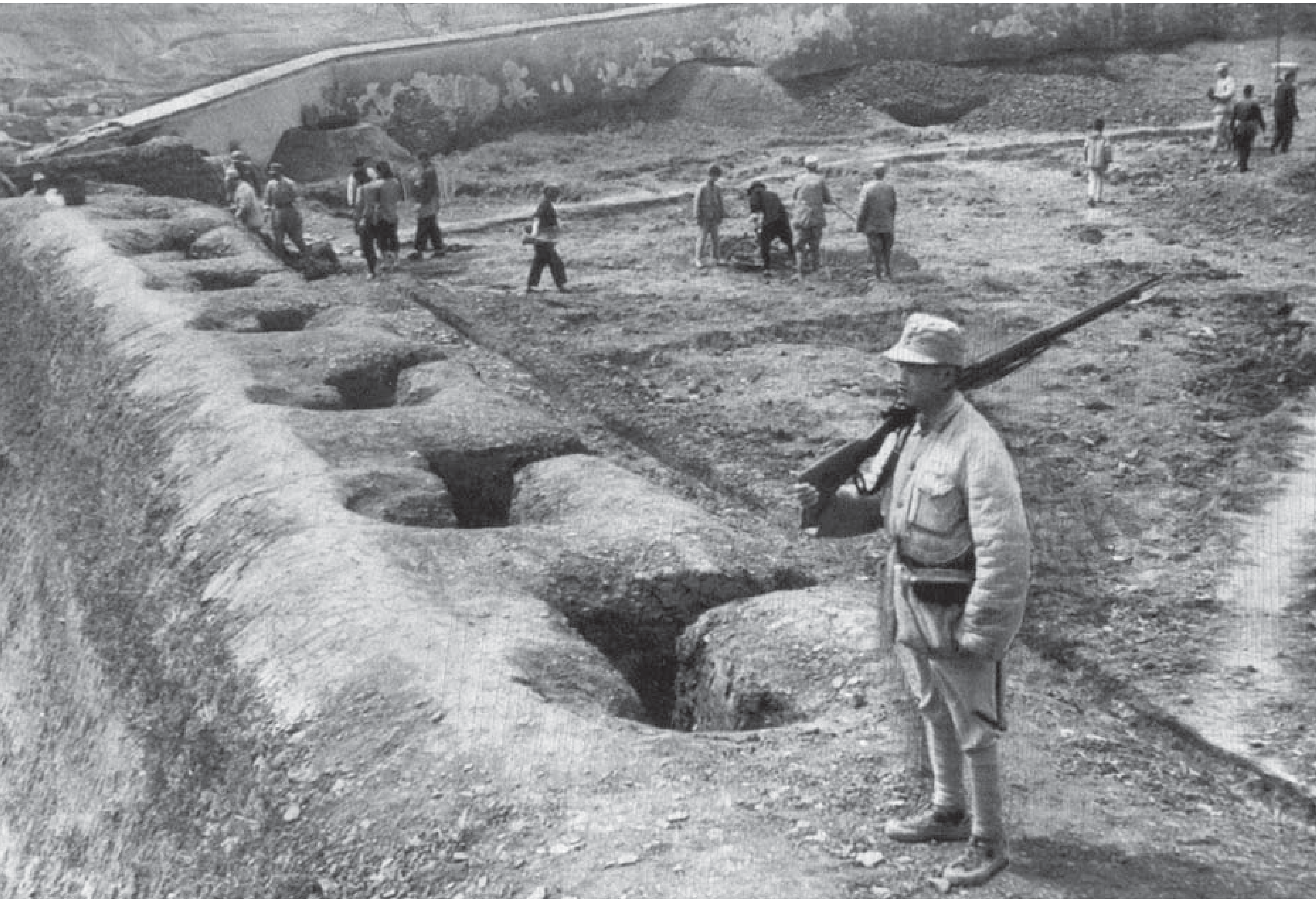
were faced by the 'elite' US-trained and equipped Nationalist divisions of the 1st New Army, under the command of General Sun Li-jen. They forced the Communists to withdraw again across the Sungari River to their bases in northern Manchuria. On 10 March yet another Communist offensive was launched again against Changchun, but this one came to a halt after three days. Although these offensives were deemed to have failed, as expected they did begin to affect the morale of the soldiers and civilians in Nationalist-held parts of Manchuria. After the end of the March offensive Communist forces switched to large-scale guerrilla raids. These mainly involved attacking the Nationalist supply lines between the cities and towns they controlled. Although most populated areas were heavily garrisoned by Nationalist units they did not often stray outside the walls of their strongholds. During 1947 the main priority for the Nationalists became maintaining supply lines to the cities, towns and villages they garrisoned. As the Japanese had done in the 1930s and early 1940s, the Nationalists fortified railway lines and major roads to keep supplies flowing but this involved large numbers of troops. Manchurian cities became virtual prison camps for the Nationalists – they were too strong for the Communists to storm but became increasingly isolated.

The Communist tactics began to affect even the best of the Nationalist troops like the New 1st Army as the constant garrison duties sapped the morale of these previous mobile troops. Their morale was not helped when Chiang began moving some of his better officers like Sun into office jobs. They were replaced by officers who were less competent commanders but who were trusted by Chiang. The morale of these better Nationalist divisions was sapped in futile attempts to keep contact between the various government-held enclaves. These Nationalist-held enclaves often contained garrisons of hundreds of thousands of soldiers as well as countless civilians. By the middle of the year the Nationalist air force and civilian transport companies were trying in vain to supply 700,000 men.

The next 'May offensive' launched on the 10th of that month by the Communists involved between 250,000–300,000 men in 25 divisions and five independent divisions, and was joined by large numbers of Koreans. The Koreans arrived in Manchuria in well-organized and well-trained formations which could be sent straight to the front line. Other foreign 'volunteers' included a number of Mongolians and Japanese – some who had volunteered and others who had had little choice in the matter. The Communists were well armed and had a reasonable number of artillery pieces from 75mm to 155mm in calibre. They had been trained by the Soviet advisors to concentrate their artillery in the standard Red Army way. The offensive pushed back the Nationalists up to 150 miles and inflicted heavy casualties, while encircling the city of Szepingkai and threatening Mukden. Nationalist aircraft managed somehow to keep Mukden and Changchun supplied but other smaller cities and towns fell to the Communists. By early June Szepingkai was the only city still in Nationalist hands between Mukden and Changchun. During June several smaller towns and cities were also abandoned by the Nationalists with their garrisons concentrating around Mukden. The city of Antung was left to the Communists along with considerable amounts of arms and equipment. Szepingkai fell to the Communists in mid-June only to be recaptured by the Nationalists on 2 July.

The arrival of large numbers of Nationalist troops of the 52nd and 14th armies allowed them to go onto the offensive from their base at Mukden. Nationalist troops of the New 1st Army and 8th Army also launched attacks from Changchun and Kirin. When the fighting ended in July due to heavy rainstorms the outlook for the Nationalists in Manchuria was not very good. They had lost half of their territory and two-thirds of the railways as well as huge amounts of war material. A large number of troops had deserted with most unit's strengths down by 50 per cent with one division – the 88th – down to battalion strength.

After a lull in the fighting which lasted several months, a sixth Communist offensive began on 15 September. The main aim of this



The defences of a Nationalist-held town are prepared against Communist assault during the closing stages of the Civil War. The earthworks are being added to the existing wall of the city and have gun positions dug into them. Nationalist cities were usually heavily garrisoned but became increasingly isolated as the war went on. Often the garrison would surrender to the Communists before an attack was launched, usually led by their officers who had secretly negotiated with the enemy beforehand.

offensive was to isolate southern Manchuria from northern China and this was achieved by cutting the Peking–Mukden railway.

On 1 October the second phase of the offensive got under way with the twin objectives of isolating Mukden from the other Nationalist-held cities in Manchuria, and cutting it off from the ports of Hulutao and Yingkow. Again the Nationalists withdrew into the cities and simply increased the number of mouths to be fed by the air force. Several towns fell to the Communists, further isolating the Nationalist-held Mukden and Changchun, although the port of Yingkow still held out.

Nationalist reinforcements were again brought in and the Communists withdrew ready for their next big effort in December. During this latest lull in the fighting the morale in the Nationalist enclaves deteriorated further, although on 13 November Kirin was retaken by government forces. The seventh offensive, which began on 15 December, was again aimed at isolating Mukden but its garrison was reinforced by the 30th and 38th divisions from Changchun. The year ended with a virtual stalemate in Manchuria, but the Nationalists knew that 1948 would bring more of the same from the Communists.

YENAN 1947–48

The Nationalists were buoyed in March 1947 by the taking of the Communist 'capital' at Yenan in Shensi province. This operation by 150,000 Nationalist troops supported by 75 aircraft was led by General Hu Tsung-han known as 'eagle of the north-west'. When Hu's elite Muslim cavalry entered Yenan on 19 March they had to fight a rearguard of Communist troops. Mao Tse-tung and his military escort had left Yenan well before the Nationalists arrived. The capture of Yenan was heralded as a great victory by the Nationalists and even in the West it was given more prominence than it merited. Chiang Kai-shek was flown into Yenan for a photo opportunity and a tour of his enemy's 'lair'. Unknown to Chiang, the Communists had been tipped off about the attack by a spy in General Hu's headquarters. As Mao and his retinue retreated before the Nationalists they laid ambushes to trap the pursuing enemy. Mao philosophically remarked 'We will give Chiang Yenan. He will give us China'. A year later in April 1948 when the war was beginning to turn for the Communists, General Hu withdrew his troops from Yenan under pressure from Communist forces. The Nationalists had lost an estimated 100,000 men in the rather pointless campaign in Shensi.

BATTLE FOR KAIFENG

In the fighting in Honan province in May 1948, the fall of the Nationalist-held city of Kaifeng and the battle fought in its aftermath was of particular significance. In the battles around the city the Communists, for the first time, fought the Nationalists using tanks, artillery and massed infantry. At the time the Nationalists had 25 brigades with about 250,000 in the Kaifeng–Chengchow sector plus about 50,000 Peace Preservation Corps and other second-line troops. The Communists had 200,000 regulars supported by a large number of guerrillas and militia. During the battle Chiang Kai-shek flew into the city of Chengchow to direct operations. One of his first orders was for the air force to bomb Kaifeng, which they did from a great height – missing the Communists and killing many civilians. The city fell on 19 June although battles continued into July with the Nationalists' 18th Group Army advancing from Chengchow to attempt to retake it. For once the Nationalists, with overwhelming numbers, won the day with Chen Yi withdrawing before his troops were surrounded. Although the Nationalists could claim victory it was a Pyhrric one as they suffered 90,000 losses.

MANCHURIA 1948

In the first days of January 1948 the Communists launched their first major conventional offensive in Manchuria. This offensive opened with a nine-day guerrilla offensive before the regular Communist units joined the attack on 14 January. The Communist commander Lin Piao's plan was to cut Mukden's rail links with Chinchow and the port of Yingkow. Nationalist units would then have to disperse to protect these cities, leaving the way open to the city of Ssuping. Once Ssuping was taken Nationalist-held Manchuria would be basically cut in two and their isolated strongholds could then be taken one by one. Heavy fighting took place throughout January and February and Ssuping was soon surrounded by 11 Communist divisions. The city finally fell on 12 March and the defending 88th Nationalist Division, which had fought at Shanghai in 1937, was outnumbered five to one by the Communist besiegers. Next to fall to the Communists was the city of Kirin, abandoned by its garrison which then withdrew to Changchun. In the meantime the port of Yingkow had fallen to the Communists on 27 February and the city of Szepingkai fell on 13 March. Now only Changchun and Mukden were in Nationalist hands, although there were substantial forces with plenty of artillery and tanks in both cities. These forces could easily have gone onto the offensive to try and recapture territory between the two cities, but their commanders had lost all will to take the offensive to the Communists and instead preferred to remain safe behind the walls of their strongholds.

In the summer of 1948 the fighting in Manchuria again intensified as Mao and his military commanders decided the time was now right to completely destroy the Nationalists there. By this time the Nationalist troops holed up in their garrisons had been suitably weakened by several years of isolation and inactivity amongst a largely hostile population. At the same time the Communists were now materially and numerically strong enough to take the Nationalists' well-fortified cities and towns, either by negotiation or storm. By September Lin Piao had managed to put together an army of 700,000 men in Manchuria and 300,000 support troops and porters with 183,000 surrounding Mukden. A further 65,000 were around Changchun and 179,000 were positioned between Mukden and Chinchow. Another 180,000 were held in reserve to move to block any relief effort by the Nationalists. The Nationalists had a total of 550,000 men in 14 corps and 44 divisions including second-line Peace Preservation Corps troops. Only about 300,000 troops were in the field as the rest were effectively trapped inside the cities they held.

Changchun, the most northerly of the big Manchurian cities, was garrisoned by the 'elite' 1st New Army of 100,000 men. By May 1948 it was surrounded on all sides by the Communists and had to be supplied by airlifts which involved much of the Nationalists' transport fleet. These airlifts were also expensive – the entire Nationalist military budget for the second half of 1948 had been spent supplying the city for just two months! During the siege many civilians died of starvation as the amount of food flown in was far from sufficient. The city fell after a five-month siege, lasting from 23 May until 19 October. The Communist victory had been aided by dissension amongst Changchun's defenders, when a division which had been flown into Changchun from Yunnan in far-off south-west China defected. This defection by troops brought in from other provinces highlights yet another weakness of the Nationalists in Manchuria. Troops from regions from the other end of a country as vast and diverse as China were expected to 'fight to the death' in the defence of Manchuria – it was not surprising that they were reluctant. Chiang Kai-shek's risky policy of shipping in troops from the 'loyal' provinces of southern China to fight for him in Manchuria was doomed to failure.

In October, in an attempt to stop the rot in Manchuria, Chiang flew to Mukden to personally direct operations. At the same time he began the futile exercise of moving commanders around various commands in the north-east. When he arrived in Mukden, which was also surrounded by Communist forces, Chiang ordered the Nationalist commander General Wei Li-huang to send a relieving force of half of the 230,000-strong Mukden garrison to march to the relief of the city of Chinchow which was under threat. Chiang had realized that the Communist attack against

People's Liberation Army troops cheer their victory in the pivotal battle of Hsuchow on the plains of northern China in late 1948/early 1949. The Communists in north China had been reinforced by troops from Manchuria where they had recently defeated the Nationalist Army. By early January 1949 the Nationalists had been defeated with catastrophic losses of 320,000 men.

Mukden was really a feint to draw troops away from the huge military supplies kept at Chinchow which were their real target. Although Chiang's orders came through on 25 September Wei did not send the force towards Chinchow until 9 October, and even then he disobeyed by only sending 11 of the 15 divisions Chiang had ordered as reinforcements.

General Wei ordered the commander of the Changchun garrison to send troops from his garrison towards Chinchow at the same time. The Changchun commander Cheng T'sung-kao ignored the order and on 15 October Chinchow and its 100,000-strong garrison fell after one of the Nationalist divisions defending it defected to the Communists. The Communists then turned on the Nationalist units advancing slowly to relieve Chinchow.

With half of the garrison gone, and with the Communists newly equipped with weapons and ammunition from Chinchow, Mukden was now in mortal danger. The troops in Mukden could now only be supplied by air, people soon began to starve and those that could escaped from the city. Things looked bleak as high-ranking officers escaped by air and the civilians who could afford to bribed the air crews to fly them out. On 2 November 1948 the garrison commander defected and the city fell to the Communists without a fight.

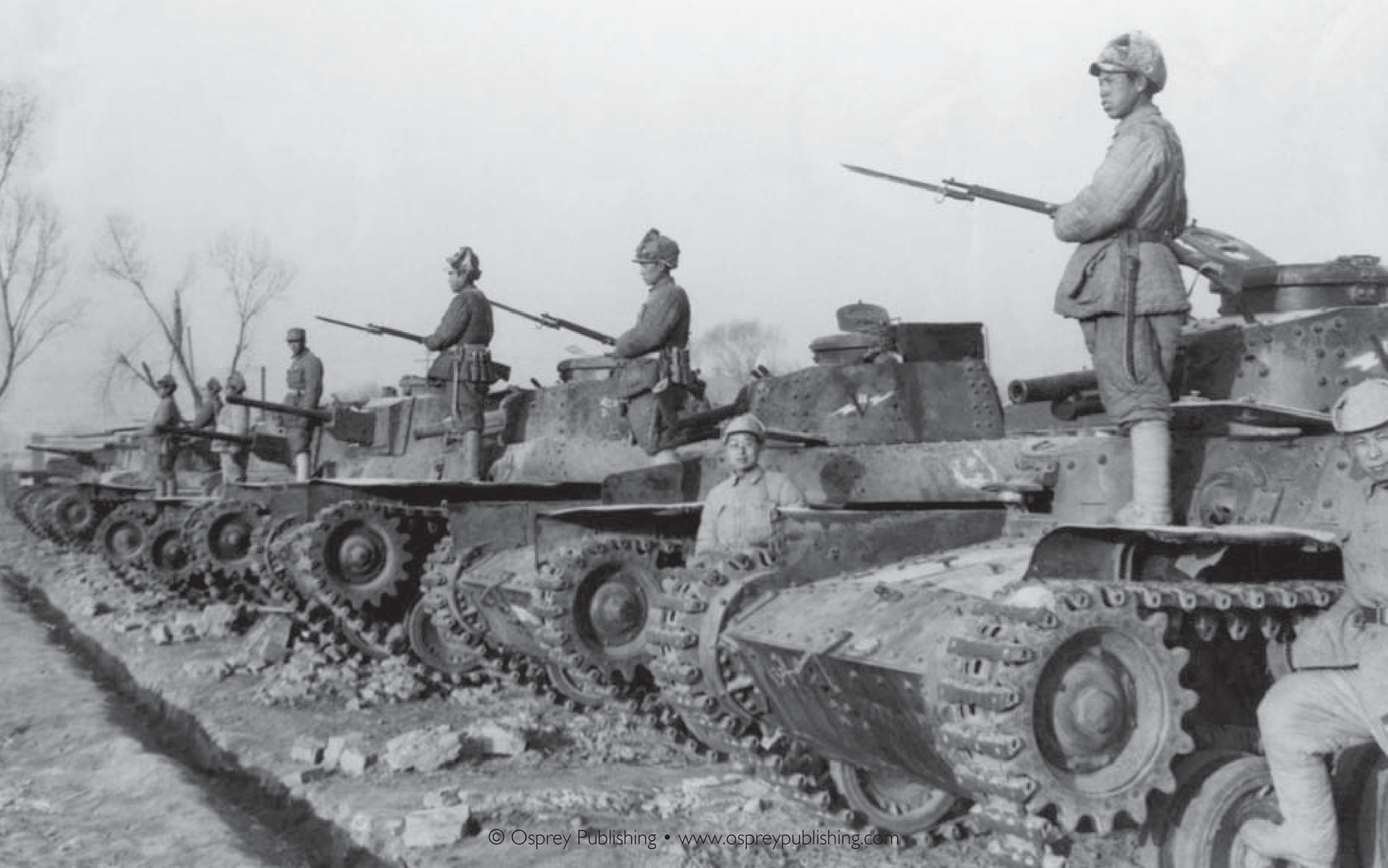
The Nationalists had now lost the whole of Manchuria and had suffered 400,000 casualties during the campaign. Only 140,000 of their troops escaped to join their comrades south of the Great Wall, while many of their comrades joined the PLA. A small force of 20,000 men managed to fight their way to the port of Yingkow for evacuation to the south. As well as gaining new recruits, the PLA also acquired some of the Nationalists' best equipment and weaponry. Chiang Kai-shek had aimed to destroy the Communists in Manchuria and had ended up suffering a crushing defeat himself. Although the war was not over the pendulum had swung heavily in favour of the Communists. Most analysts now thought that it was a matter of when rather than whether the Nationalists would be defeated. Chiang could put a brave face on the defeat and claim that the real battle for China would be fought south of the Great Wall, but in reality the war had been won and lost in Manchuria and Chiang had engineered his own downfall.

THE HUAI-HAI CAMPAIGN

After the debacle of the Manchurian defeat in early November 1948 Chiang consulted some of his best strategists about what to do next. The four-province region of Anhwei–Shangtung–Honan–Kiangsu was now targeted by the Communists. This region was at the centre of Chiang's government and if it was lost he would be left with just the south and west of China. His advisors recommended that to defend this vital territory the Nationalists should now concentrate their forces on a defence line along the Huai River 100 miles north of the Yangtze River. Chiang ignored their advice and decided that the main defensive effort should be centred on the city of Hsuchow in Shantung province which was 100 miles further north than the Huai River. His rationale was that Hsuchow had great strategic value and was the intersection of the main west–east and north–south railway system. Chiang believed that whoever won the battle for Hsuchow and its surrounding railway network would control north China as far south as the Yangtze River. However, the city was on the southern edge of the north China plain which gave the Communists a distinct strategic advantage, as the open terrain in front of the city would allow the PLA to manoeuvre their forces, wearing down the static Nationalist defences with the rapid assaults and strategic withdrawals as they had during the Manchurian Campaign. Chiang was obsessed with defending the railways and as prevously, he insisted on keeping large numbers of troops in garrisons. When they did attack it was usually along the railways and major roads where they were easy targets for the 'hit and run' attacks of the more mobile Communist columns.

The battle for Hsuchow and Shantung province has been described by some commentators as 'The Greatest Battle of the 20th century on the Chinese Mainland'. It involved 600,000 Nationalist troops against a similar number of Communists with the assistance of two million support troops, porters and guerrillas. Both armies had large numbers of tanks and the Communists now had substantial numbers of artillery pieces which they had captured in Manchuria. The Nationalists still had air superiority, but they now relied more on their transport aircraft than their bombers. Poor morale meant that the Nationalist pilots often flew too high to be effective against ground targets in any case.

Nationalist forces defending Hsuchow were made up of the 2nd Army Group which was situated to the west of the city with 14 divisions, one cavalry brigade and four divisions of Pacification troops. In Hsuchow itself was the 13th Army Group with six divisions, and to the east was the 7th Army Group with ten divisions which were soon joined by a further

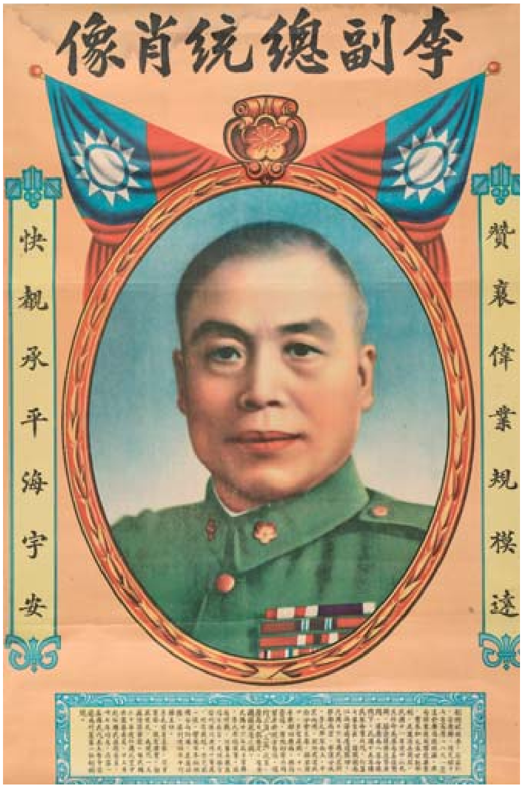


Victorious Communist troops stand on top of captured Nationalist tanks which had previously been captured from the Japanese Army in 1945. Both sides used ex-Japanese tanks like these Type 95s during the Civil War although the Communists tended to capture theirs later from the Nationalists. The source of much of the civil war weaponry is indicated by the fact that all the soldiers are also armed with Japanese Arisaka rifles.

three divisions. In addition, the 16th Army Group was strung out along the vital rail link to the Nationalist capital at Nanking. The Communist forces which were approaching Hsuchow from the east were General Ch'en Yi's East China Field Army and from the west General Liu Po-ch'eng's Central Plains Field Army. Both Communist commanders were veterans of the Long March in 1934–35 and General Liu had the nickname of 'One Eyed Dragon' because of an old war wound.

On 8 November the first Communist attack against the Nationalists' 7th Group Army began, with two of its ten divisions – a total force of 23,000 men – defecting to the PLA. The 7th began a retreat towards the relative safety of Hsuchow but their way was blocked by Communist forces, which then surrounded them. Meanwhile, the Nationalists' 2nd and 16th group armies began to withdraw in panic towards Hsuchow. For once, heavy bombing raids by the Nationalist air force did manage to keep the PLA at bay but a further defection by six Nationalist divisions ruined their plans. As usual, Chiang meddled with battlefield decisions and Nationalist commanders feuded and refused to support each other when under attack. Chiang had ordered the 2nd and 16th armies to go to the aid of the surrounded 7th but they managed to advance just 8 miles in ten days. Their advance stopped 12 miles short of the 7th Army's positions, where they were joined by the 3,000 survivors of the 90,000 soldiers they had been ordered to rescue. Mao had been very clear that he wanted as few of the Nationalist troops to escape this decisive battle as possible. Chiang then ordered the Nationalist 8th and 12th group armies to move to the aid of Hsuchow, but both armies were trapped by the Communists by 26 November. The 12th Group Army, with its 125,000 men and several mechanized units, would be a major prize for the Communists if they could defeat it. In order to try and save the 12th, the bulk of the 250,000-strong Hsuchow garrison abandoned the city and moved south.

In the last few days of the defence of the city several of its highest-ranking officers flew to safety including Chiang Kai-shek's son, Colonel Chiang Wei-kuo. Chiang's son had commanded an armoured unit equipped with M5 tanks in Hsuchow which had seen no action during the defensive fighting. Its tanks and the 13th and 2nd group armies successfully evacuated Hsuchow by 30 November and the city fell to the Communists the next day. The forces that had evacuated Hsuchow now tried to link up with the 12th Group Army, but were halted by heavy concentrations of Communist troops. Encumbered with civilian refugees and their precious


李副總统肖像
贊襄偉業規模遠
快覩承平海宇安

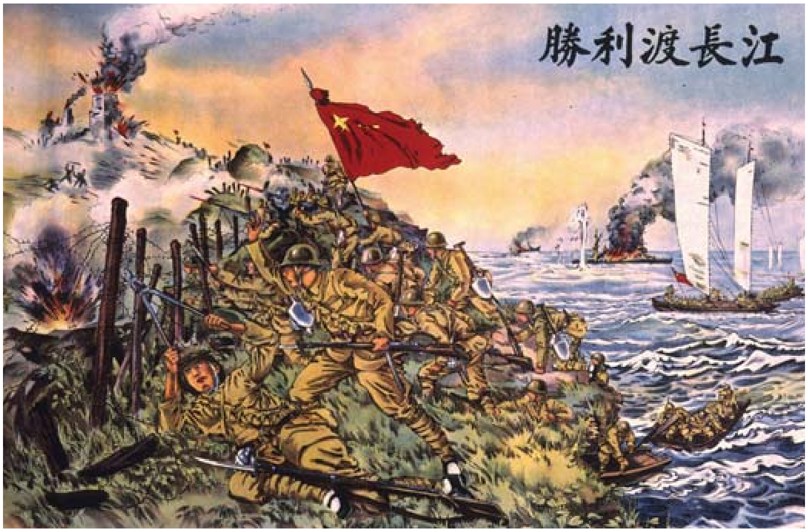
This Nationalist poster from 1949 features Li Tsung-jen, the general famous for the rare victory at Taierhchuang in 1938. As a leader of the Kwangsi Clique Li had been at war with Chiang Kai-shek in 1929–30 but later became a popular Nationalist leader. In 1948 he was elected as vice-president of the Nationalist government against the wishes of Chiang.

heavy equipment, the former troops of the Hsuchow garrison ran into dug-in Communist troops only 20 miles from the city. An attempt by the 16th Army Group to break through the Communist positions on 7 December led to its total defeat. The remaining Nationalist forces were now isolated in the vicinity of the city of Suhsien to the south of Hsuchow. Two group armies, the 6th and the 8th were then ordered to march north to relieve the 12th Group Army. Neither formation had previously shown any willingness to fight the Communists and they now avoided any confrontation with the PLA. With no chance of relief, the 12th surrendered on 15 December leaving the Hsuchow garrison to be finished off by the Communists. The PLA moved 300,000 men into position and on 6 January launched an all-out offensive against the remaining Nationalist troops.

Chiang Kai-shek and his advisors made the particularly brutal decision that the Nationalist formations should be bombed by their own air force, to prevent their valuable heavy equipment falling into Communist hands. When the trapped Nationalist officers learned of this plan, they swiftly surrendered to the PLA. During the fighting in December the Communists had been greatly assisted by the spying of Chiang Kai-shek's military assistant, General Liu Fei, who had told them the Nationalist plans in detail. By 10 January the fighting was over and the Nationalists had suffered a crippling defeat which essentially sealed their fate. Besides losing 500,000 men killed or captured in the fighting plus much heavy weaponry, the Nationalist defeat demonstrated that the Communists could now beat them in a conventional campaign. Furthermore, the PLA now had enough equipment and weaponry to face any Nationalist army that Chiang Kai-shek could raise on equal terms, both in men and now in machines. Although the Communists had suffered 100,000 casualties in the campaign, they had taken 327,000 prisoners, many of whom willingly volunteered to fight in the People's Liberation Army. The particularly bitter nature of the fighting around Hsuchow was highlighted by the report of a US correspondent. He managed to examine the bodies of Communist dead brought into a Nationalist headquarters at the height of the fighting. When he noticed that most had received a single bullet to the back of their heads he asked a Nationalist officer to explain. With a shrug of his shoulders the officer said that there was not enough medical care available for his own men without worrying about the enemy wounded.

THE NATIONALIST ARMY IN 1949

By January 1949 the Nationalists had been reduced to an estimated 1,500,000 soldiers, of which only a third could be described as combat troops. Over a period of four and a half months the Nationalists had lost an estimated 45 per cent of their strength. US estimates of the Nationalist losses between September 1948 and February 1949 were 400,000 rifles, 140,000 of which were new US models. The PLA had taken into their ranks 600,000 ex-Nationalist soldiers, with the majority of them serving as second-line service troops. Official Communist estimates of their gains and the number of casualties inflicted on the Nationalists during the period July 1946 to February 1949 were also published at the time. They said that they had killed, wounded or taken prisoner almost five million Nationalist troops with 75 per cent of this figure being captives. Of this total, 2,641,000 had been inflicted on the Nationalists between July 1946 and July 1948, and 2,318,000 between July 1948 and January 1949. The number of Nationalist generals killed during the 1946–49 period was 67, while another 697 had been taken prisoner. Another 105 generals had defected to the Communists, usually with most or all of the troops under their command. Communist claims of the number of Nationalist units destroyed during the three years made sober reading: 380 divisions, 615 regiments and 760 battalions. The amount of war material captured explains why the Nationalists were said to have served as the Communists' quartermasters. In total the Communists captured 1,902,000 small arms and



This Communist propaganda painting celebrates the first crossing of the Yangtze River by the People's Liberation Army in May 1949. The campaign to get all of the Communist forces across the river, which was defended by the Nationalist Army, took a month, eventually ending on 25 May.

37,000 artillery pieces, from mortars to heavy field guns. They also stated that they had captured 513 tanks as well as destroying 140 more and had also taken 289 armoured vehicles. Ammunition captured included 250 million rounds of small-arms ammunition and 2,580,000 artillery shells.

NORTHERN CHINA 1949

After the so-called 'strategic withdrawal' of the Nationalist Army from Manchuria, their main formations in northern China were based around Peking. In northern China the Nationalists were heavily dependent on the forces of General Fu Tso-yi, which controlled the zone around the Tientsin–Suiyuan Railway. His own well-disciplined troops were joined by reinforcements which took his total strength to 375,000 men in 40 divisions and 98 aircraft. These troops were the key to the Nationalists' control of northern China but the problem was that their loyalty was to Fu rather than to Chiang Kai-shek. Unusually for a Nationalist commander, the general had gained his men's loyalty by making sure their families were fed and cared for. But because of Fu's perceived disloyalty to Chiang, his troops had been starved of the arms and ammunition that they needed to fight the Communists.

When Communist commander Lin Piao's 800,000 men marched south from Manchuria in November 1948 they were soon fighting Fu's armies. By mid-December the PLA had surrounded the city of Tientsin 80 miles from Peking, and a force of 20 Communist divisions was sent against its defences. The Tientsin garrison of 85,000 men sheltered inside the city's strong fortifications while the PLA bombarded them with 200 field guns. Tientsin fell on 14 January but not before a bloody battle through the streets of the city, during which both sides suffered heavy casualties. Fu now had to decide whether to try to defend Peking from the PLA. In the end he realized that the war was lost, and pragmatically decided to negotiate instead. His decision may also have been affected by the fact that he found that a spy on his staff had handed over his defence plans for the city to the Communists.

On 3 February the victorious People's Liberation Army marched through the streets of Peking with tanks, armoured vehicles, towed artillery pieces, trucks and staff cars. As one commentator dryly noted, any American watching the military hardware passing could not help but notice that nearly every tank and truck was US made. When the city fell, Fu's 200,000-strong garrison largely went over to the Communists, bringing the total of Nationalists to surrender in a four-month period to an astonishing 1,500,000! In a clever move by the Communists, all of Fu's 25 divisions which had surrendered were allowed to join the PLA. Their officers were also allowed to join, and if they volunteered they kept their rank and their former pay rate. Those who did not want to join were allowed to leave the army and were even given three months' pay in a highly successful propaganda gesture. Most Nationalist commanders had by this time had given up the fight and most were hoping for a ticket to the safety of Formosa. In 1949 the 'Shansi warlord' Yen Hsi-shan commented that the only way to save the Nationalists now was for them to recruit '200 Flying Tigers and 100,000 Japanese mercenaries'. He had controlled Shansi province since 1917 and said that he had no intention of surrendering his capital Taiyuan to the Communists. He was photographed by the press with a line of cyanide capsules for himself and his officers. When Taiyuan fell on 24 April he had escaped from the city, although several of his officers did commit suicide and the Japanese mercenaries in his army fought to the last man. Once the remaining Nationalist garrisons in northern China had fallen, the PLA could now prepare for its final offensive across the Yangtze River and into southern China.

THE FALL OF THE NATIONALIST SOUTH

The whole of 1949 was described by some commentators as a Communist 'procession' as the People's Liberation Army marched southwards through Nationalist-held China. In April 1949, following the collapse of Nationalist forces north of the Yangtze River, the south bank formed a rough defensive line against the PLA. The Nationalist troops defending the south bank were strung out along the front. Each division had to cover an average front of 30 miles and the PLA knew that once they had crossed the river in large numbers they could easily outflank the Nationalists.

At the time of the Communists' final major offensives in April 1949, the remaining Nationalist forces were estimated to be made up of the following: 350,000 men in the Nanking–Shanghai region; 125,000 troops in the region around Sian; 120,000 around Hankow; 120,000 men in the relatively untouched north-west of China; and a further 150,000 garrisoning isolated strongholds throughout Nationalist-held

The *Amethyst* Incident

The attention of the world was temporarily distracted from the death throes of the Nationalists by an international incident in April. On 20 April the 1,480-ton British frigate HMS *Amethyst* was sailing up the Yangtze River towards the Nationalist capital at Nanking, where it intended to deliver supplies to the British Embassy. However, when it reached Chinkiang it came under fire from Communist field guns on the bank. Although the frigate fired back its crew suffered 17 dead, 20 wounded and a mortally wounded captain, Lieutentant-Commander B. M. Skinner. After running aground, the ship was held hostage by the Communists who claimed that its presence in Chinese waters was a 'criminal invasion' of their territorial waters. Although a rescue attempt was made by two other British ships they were damaged and forced to withdraw. After three months the new commander, Lieutenant-Commander J. S. Kerans, decided to weigh anchor and run the gauntlet of Communist guns on 30 July. Although the ship came under fire again it managed to get past the batteries on the shore without sustaining too much damage. When the *Amethyst* rejoined the British fleet in the mouth of the Yangtze it unloaded its wounded in Shanghai. The sight of British sailors wounded by Chinese guns had a surprising effect on the population, raising the prestige of the Communists within the city.

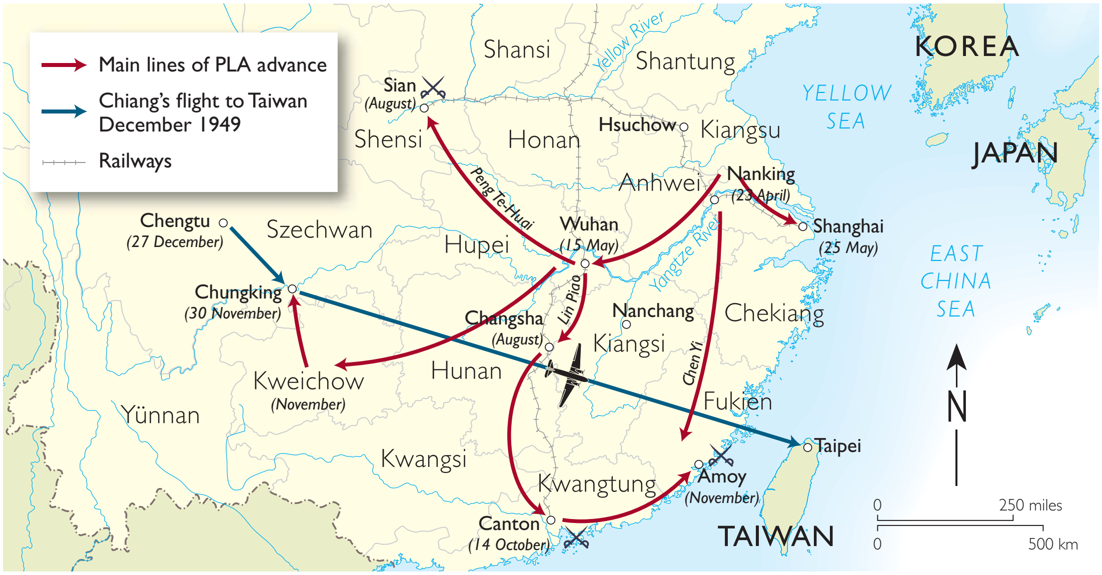
territory. To this total could be added 200,000–300,000 soldiers who had already been withdrawn from the mainland to Formosa.

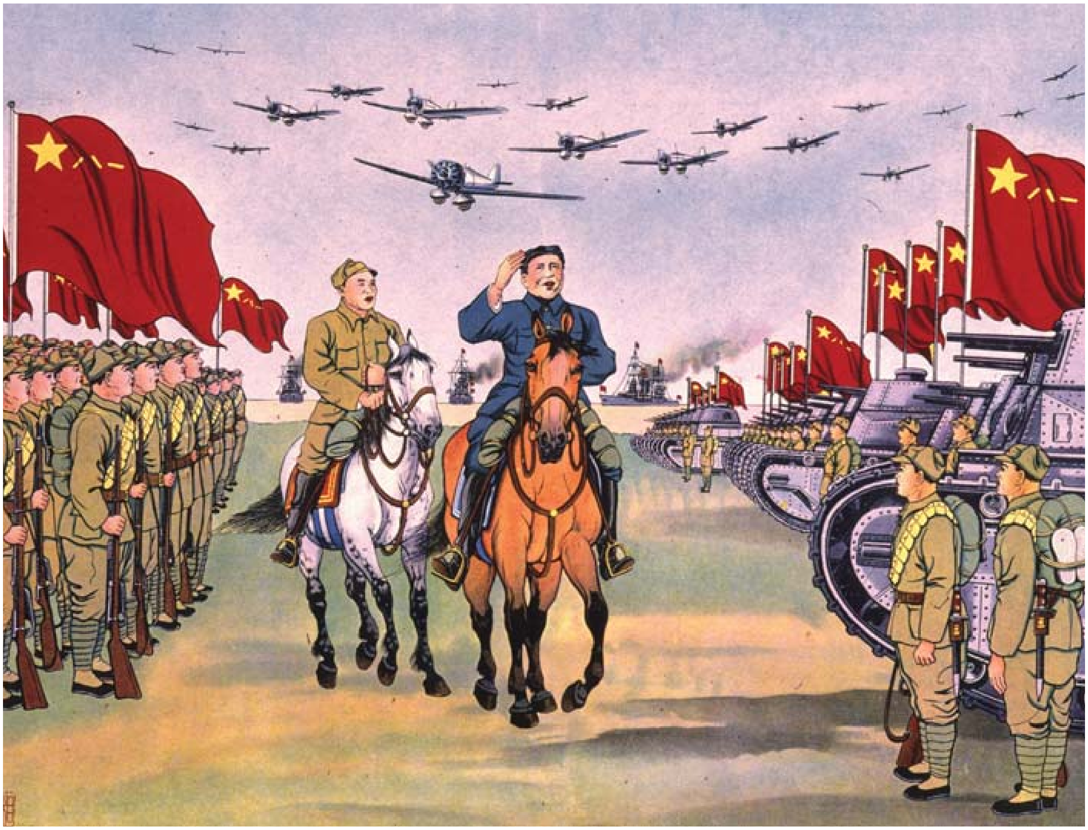
When the Communist push began they crossed the Yangtze River in a flotilla of junks and other small boats without having to fire a shot on the night of 20–21 April. Although the river was protected at the crossing point by the Chiangyin Fortress with its 30 large guns, its garrison went over to the Communists instead of firing on them. After pushing aside Nationalist troops in the vicinity they immediately threatened the Nationalist capital Nanking. Chiang Kai-shek's capital fell on 23 April having been abandoned by its garrison and all government officials. The city of Wuhan was lost to the Communists shortly afterwards as the demoralized Nationalists realized all was lost. Hangchow, capital of Chekiang province, fell on 3 May and the PLA pushed on to Shanghai. Although they stalled in front of Shanghai due to stubborn Nationalist defenders, the resistance was eventually broken.

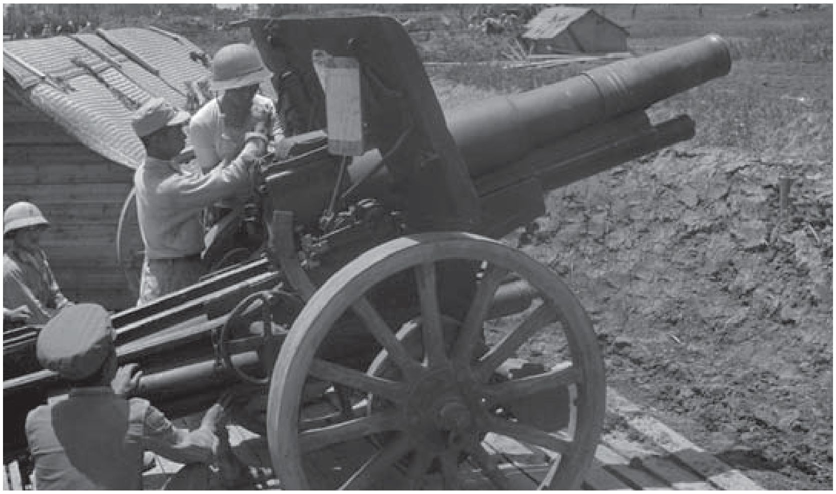
The Nationalists had lost 180,000 men in the fighting for the Yangtze and only had about 150,000 left to defend Shanghai and the region around it. Shanghai, which was supposed to be defended to the last man, fell in late May without any real resistance from the Nationalists. During the course of 1949 a major recruiting drive by the Nationalists created large poorly trained formations which looked good on paper. After this recruitment the Nationalist Army was estimated to have strength of 1,090,000 men with 250,000 in Szechwan province and a similar number in Kiangsi province. There were 200,000 troops in the Nationalist

Opposite page
This Communist propaganda poster from 1950 shows an idealistic view of massed reviews which took place after the People's Liberation Army's victory in 1949. Chairman Mao rides past the massed ranks of PLA infantry and tanks captured by the Communists while the ex-Nationalist planes of the new Red Air Force fly overhead.

THE FALL OF NATIONALIST-HELD SOUTHERN CHINA 1949


Main lines of PLA advance
Chiang's flight to Taiwan December 1949
Railways
Shansi
Yellow River
Shantung
KOREA
YELLOW SEA
JAPAN
Sian (August)
Shensi
Honan
Hsuchow
Kiangsu
Anhwei
Nanking (23 April)
Shanghai (25 May)
Peng Te-Huai
Chengtu (27 December)
Szechwan
Hupei
Wuhan (15 May)
Yangtze River
EAST CHINA SEA
Chungking (30 November)
Lin Piao
Changsha (August)
Nanchang
Chekiang
Kiangsi
Chen Yi
Kweichow (November)
Hunan
Fukien
N
Yünnan
Taipei
Kwangsi
Amoy (November)
Kwangtung
Canton (14 October)
TAIWAN
0
250 miles
0
500 km



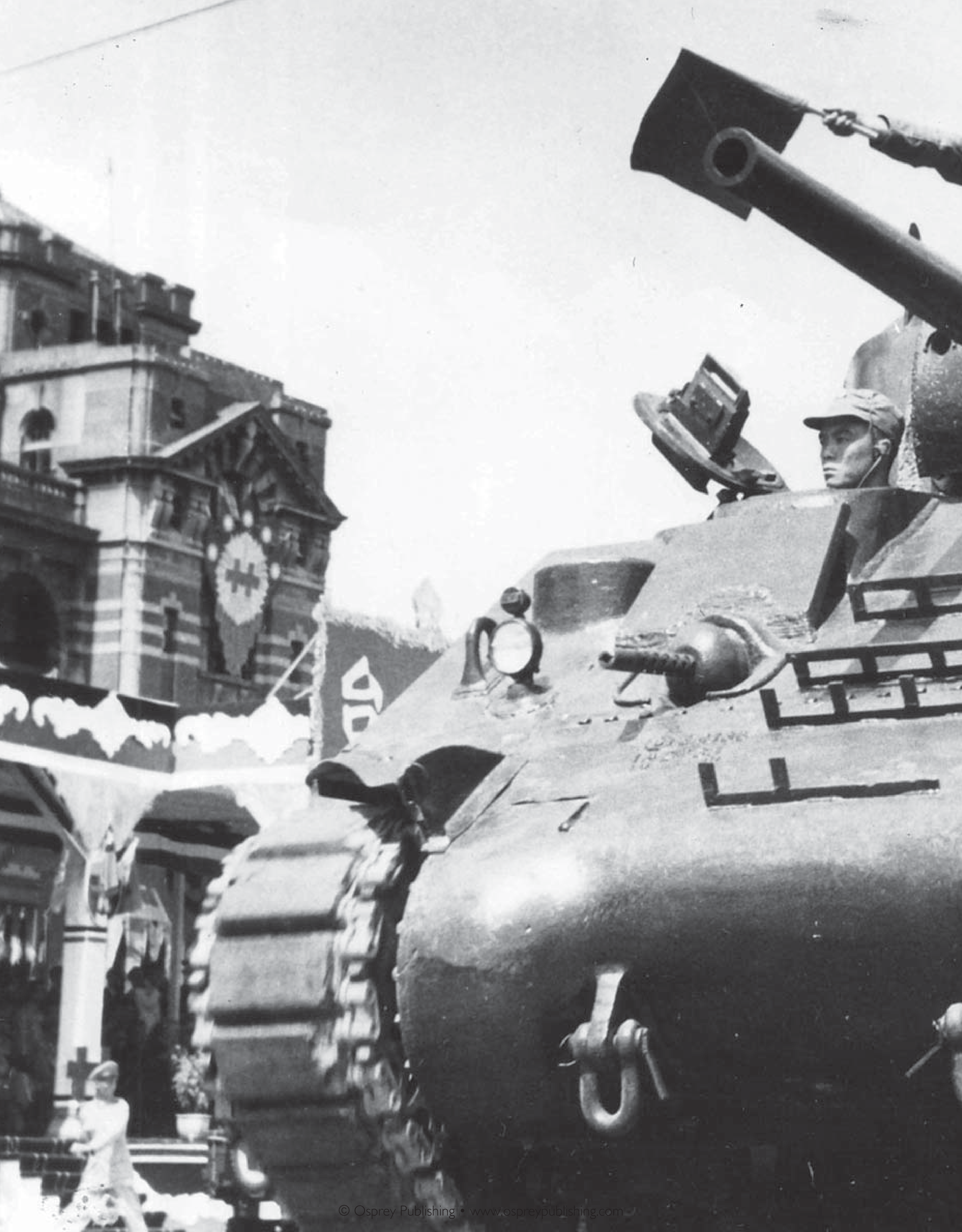


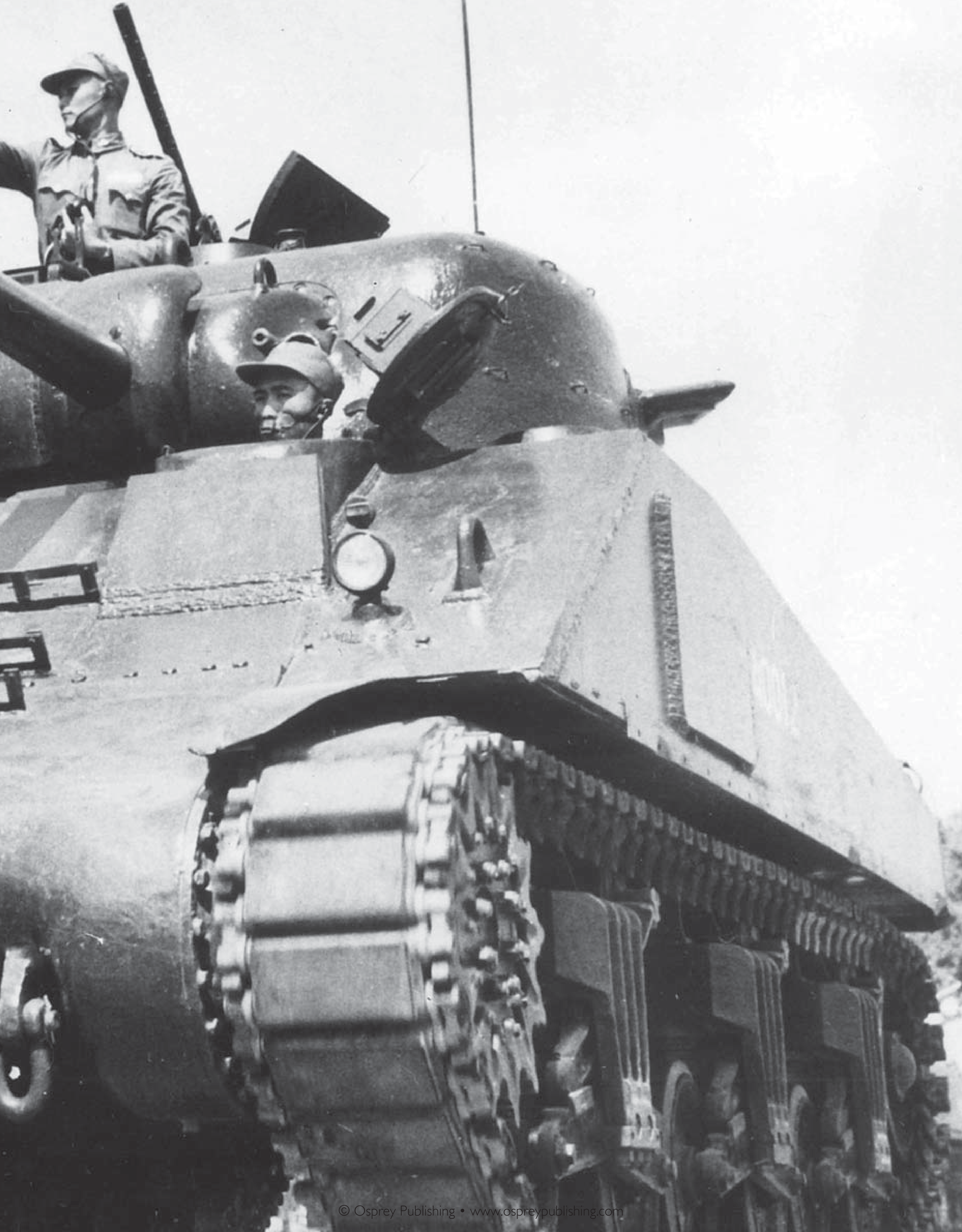
An ex-Japanese Type 4 150mm howitzer in service with the Nationalist Army fires from its defensive position outside Shanghai in May 1949. Most of the modern artillery pieces used by the Nationalists were supplied by the US government and many of these were captured by the Communists during the war. The cork sun helmets worn by two of the crewmen are also from Japanese stocks captured in 1945 and have had their old insignia removed.

stronghold of Kwangtung, and another 100,000 had been evacuated from Shanghai. These figures meant very little in reality as few of the troops listed had any intention of fighting as more and more Nationalist units defected to the PLA.

In the meantime the Communists had been growing in strength, mainly by absorbing the defecting and surrendering Nationalist formations. In mid-1949 they had a front-line strength of 1,500,000 men, of which 730,000 were concentrated in strategically important central China. In a last major effort by the Nationalists to defend their southern heartland they launched another huge recruitment drive. Besides thousands of raw and often pressed recruits this last-gasp force was to be reinforced by 150,000 troops from Hainan island and 50,000 troops from Taiwan. These were joined by 50,000 scratch troops belonging to the Kwangtung provincial governor, General Yu Han-mou, to defend his province. Meanwhile a westwards Communist advance from Wuhan took Sian in Shensi province and Lanchow, the capital of Kansu province, in August. A further advance secured the surrender of the Nationalist armies in the remote provinces of Sinkiang, Suiyuan and Ningsia in September. A south-westwards offensive took Canton on 14 October and the wartime capital of Chungking on 30 November. In early December the Nationalists officially transferred their capital to Taipei, the major city on the island of Taiwan. This was followed on 9 December by the defection of the governor of Yunnan province to the Communists and on the 27th by the fall of the short-lived last mainland capital of Nationalist China, Chengtu in Szechwan province.

Opposite page
A column of defeated Nationalist troops are taken into captivity in the last days of the Civil War. The column includes at least one woman wearing uniform, probably a nurse attached to the unit. By late 1949, when this photograph was taken, most Nationalist troops had lost any fight they had in them and were usually happy to surrender to the Communists.





Previous page
The withdrawal of the Nationalist government to Taiwan in 1949 allowed for the survival of the Chiang Kai-shek regime in exile. US Aid for the Chinese Republic's armed forces began to arrive on the island in the early 1950s as it was turned into a fortified bastion against Communist China. This US-supplied Sherman medium M4 tank seen on parade in 1952 was soon followed by more equipment including the latest Sabre F-86 jet fighters to counter the MIG-15s in the Communists' armoury.

THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR

With Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist government safely installed on Taiwan and with only a few Nationalist units still fighting in the remote regions of China, the Communist victory was complete.

The formation of the People's Republic of China had been proclaimed by Mao Tse-tung from the Gate of the Heavenly Peace in Peking on 1 October 1949. The speedy victory of the Communists took everyone, including Mao, by surprise as he had expected that the civil war would last until 1955. After 56 years of almost continuous conflict in China and with the deaths of countless millions of civilians and soldiers, the country was finally at peace, or so it seemed. As far as both Mao and Chiang were concerned, however, the war was never over and both had their own ideas of how it would finally be concluded. Chiang Kai-shek firmly believed that his government's stay on Taiwan would be temporary and that a third world war would soon break out. He then assumed that his still-powerful Nationalist Army would fight alongside the United States against the Soviet Union and their Chinese Communist Allies. Chairman Mao was also firmly of the belief that either the 'corrupt' Nationalist government on Taiwan would collapse or that his army would soon take the island.

Most analysts were in agreement with Mao that his victorious People's Liberation Army would soon finish the Nationalists off. The first move in the 'liberation' of Nationalist-held territories began with the invasion of Hainan island. On 17 April 1950 the Communists began their campaign to take the island of Hainan from the Nationalists. They used an armada of 110 motorized junks to transport the PLA's 119th and 120th divisions from the mainland. This force was joined by the 121st and 125th divisions of Lin Piao's victorious 4th Field Army, which were shipped to Hainan by a fleet of 60 junks. The island was defended by a garrison of 100,000 under the command of the Nationalist hero General Hsueh Yueh 'Little Tiger'. His forces had been reduced in the closing stages of the civil war when many of his troops had been ordered to the mainland to defend Kwangtung province. During the fighting the Nationalists were attacked from the rear by a large number of Communist guerrillas which been active since the Japanese occupation and had been sheltering in the interior of the island. After four days' fighting even Hsueh had to admit defeat and he evacuated his remaining troops to Taiwan from the southern port of Yulin.

After the fall of Hainan the Communists now had every intention of invading Taiwan and in the spring of 1950 they gathered together a fleet of junks and barges. These were to carry the 250,000 men of the PLA's 5th Field Army over the Formosa Straits to Taiwan.

Taiwan was saved by Chairman Mao's rash decision to send his troops into the Korean War, which broke out in 1950. With the USA and other United Nations forces aiding the South Korean government, Communist China was now effectively at war with the Western powers. The advance of 200,000 Chinese soldiers into North Korea under the guise of being 'Chinese People's Volunteers' convinced the US to defend Taiwan. They moved their 7th Fleet into the Formosa Straits and any plans by the PLA to invade Taiwan were over. In 1954, after the end of the Korean War, the USA agreed to a Mutual Defence Pact with the Nationalists which virtually guaranteed Taiwan's survival.

Artillery bombardments between mainland China and the strongly fortified Nationalist islands of Quemoy and Matsu continued during the early 1950s. Nationalist aircraft flew sorties over mainland China and launched commando raids on the coastline. These were, however, really only propaganda exercises by Chiang Kai-shek who never gave up the dream of retaking China from the Communists. By the mid-1950s Mao had privately shelved his plans to take Taiwan and both Chinas settled down to a war of words. The strengthening of the Nationalist Chinese Army on Taiwan by US arms and training would now make any PLA invasion too costly. Fighting was to break out again in 1958 when the PLA began bombarding the Nationalist-held island of Quemoy just off the coast of Fukien province. By this stage, although neither Mao or Chiang Kai-shek would never accept the status quo, both states were well established and neither had any prospect of unifying China again.

LADY
MARION

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my much-loved father and mother, who have always given me great encouragement during my life and my writing career.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Throughout this book the older Wade Giles transliteration system has been used to avoid confusion for readers. Most readers will be familiar with Chiang Kai-shek rather than with the pin-yin translation from Mandarin – Jian Jieshi. Likewise with certain place names I have used the most commonly recognized version, for instance Peking, which changed to Beiping and then to its modern name Beijing. Many cities changed name several times during the 50-year period covered by this volume and to avoid confusion the most familiar version has been used.

The following will help in converting other measurements between metric and imperial:
1 mile = 1.6km
1lb = 0.45kg
1 yard = 0.9m
1ft = 0.3m